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LIFE OF WILBERFORCE.

THE

LIFE

OF

WILLIAM WILBERFORCE.

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BY HIS SONS,

ROBERT ISAAC WILBERFORCE, M. A.

VICAR OF EAST FARLEIGH, LATE FELLOW OF ORIEL COLLEGE;

AND

SAMUEL WILBERFORCE, M. A.

RECTOR OF BRIGHSTONE.

B 2/8 9

IN FIVE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

Happy is the state
In which ye, father, here do dwell at ease,
Leading a life so free and fortunate
From all the tempests of these worldly seas.

SPENCER.

LONDON:

JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET.

MDCCCXXXVIII

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JOHN CHILDS AND SON, BUNGAY.

PREFACE.

THE materials of the following Work are drawn principally from five sources :

1. Manuscript books, or detached sheets ; the earliest bearing date 1783, the latest 1833, in which Mr. Wilberforce was accustomed to note down daily occurrences. These will be found referred to under the head of " Diary."

2. A similar set, begun in 1785, and ended in 1818, devoted exclusively to religious reflections, and intended merely as a register of his internal state. These, the work principally of Sundays

and other intervals of leisure, are here designated "Journal."

In these records he seems to have had no object except to give greater regularity and fixedness to his own mind. Those of earlier date bear upon them an order for their destruction, which it was only within the last years of his life that he so far recalled as to desire them to be submitted with his other papers to the judgment of his nearest relatives. Perhaps he was himself scarcely aware of the value of the documents which he was thus laying open, for though he had upon succeeding birth-days, and other times of more especial self-examination, referred to his Journal, yet the Diary seems in general never again to have met his eye; and much of it, dispersed indiscriminately and without date among his numerous papers, was wholly inaccessible.

When, on Mr. Wilberforce's decease, these stores were unexpectedly committed to the

writers, their first feeling was an unwillingness to expose to the public gaze what was so plainly of a confidential character. "A life which is worth reading," was the pointed saying of Mackintosh, "ought never to have been written." But there are some characters fitted to exert so permanent an influence, and so clearly marked as examples to mankind, that in their case private delicacy yields to public good. Whether the present is one of these excepted instances, the readers of the following work must decide.

3. In noticing the private Correspondence which makes part of these volumes, the writers feel pleasure in warmly expressing their thanks to the many friends who have kindly supplied them with materials of the utmost value. Their first impression was to express here their obligation to the several contributors of letters nominatim; but the list swelled under their hands to such an inconvenient bulk that they reluctantly resorted to this briefer, but far less expressive, declaration of their thanks.

4. The MS. Memoranda referred to in the following pages were notes dictated late in life by Mr. Wilberforce. He was often urged by his family and friends to draw up for their instruction some record of his "Life and Times." From this task he was withheld in great measure by his unwillingness to express those censures which he could not have properly withheld. "When I assume the office of a biographer, I virtually contract an engagement to give a fair account as far as I am able of the character of the individual in question, and this has more than once prevented me from writing the lives of persons whom I have highly respected and loved, but in whose instances there were reasons why a fair statement of the whole of their characters could not be made without probable violence to the feelings of survivors."* From this rule he so far swerved, as in intervals of occasional leisure, chiefly when travelling, to record the incidents of his childhood, and a few

* Con. Mem.

interesting passages of his riper age. Specimens of these detached papers, with some other unfinished pieces, form an Appendix to the two first volumes.

5. Mr. Wilberforce's conversation would have afforded abundant materials to any one who had made it his object to provide for the public amusement. An infinite fund of anecdote, an unvarying fertility of wit, a constant readiness to be pleased and give pleasure, were its most familiar characteristics. But no such thoughts tainted the domestic intercourse which gladdened his family. "He was a burning and a shining light, and they were willing for a season to rejoice in that light." Occasionally some thought or anecdote which dropped from him was recorded for its own sake, and with no conception of its present employment; while many sayings, deeply impressed on the memory of those who heard them, have been brought out by the perusal of his papers. These various recollections, increased by some valuable contributions from

two friends especially, are here referred to as "Conversational Memoranda."

Some further matter of the same sort it is intended to publish in a separate form; and for this purpose, as well as for the completion of a volume of Correspondence, which is already in preparation and will be found to be occasionally referred to in the following pages, the assistance of those who have original materials in their hands is invited.

ERRATA.

VOL. I.

PAGE	LINE	
27,	11,	*for* Guildford *read* Guilford.
40, 41,		*for* Vergenne's *read* Vergennes'
41,	1,	*for* de *read* du
73,	13,	*for* Toalag *read* Taulay
79,	1,	*for* these *read* his
80,	10,	*for* Lady *read* Lady,
85,	19,	for *subject;* read *subject;"*
	21,	*for* and *read* " and
150,	4,	*for* Middleton's. *read* Middleton's:
155,	6,	*for* Lord *read* Mr.
156,	22,	*for* Sir Wm. Eden's *read* Mr. Eden's
160,		*for* Archduchesne and Archduch. *read* Arcedeckne
163,	8,	*for* levy *read* levee
185,	22,	*for* those *read* four
230,	21,	*for* Clavièrs *read* Clavière
238, 239, 240, 305,		*for* Chedder *read* Cheddar
243,	2,	*for* at the house of Mrs. More *read* through Mrs. More at Richard Henderson's
277,	1,	*for* Dr. *read* Thomas
293,	7,	*for* This reproach *read* Their report
302,	13,	*for* him *read* Him
304,	7,	*for* with G.'s friend *read* with G. his friend

DIRECTIONS FOR THE BINDER.

VOL. I.

Frontispiece—Portrait of Mr. Wilberforce from Rising's Picture.

VOL. II.

Frontispiece—Tabular View of the Progress of the Abolition of the Slave Trade.

VOL. IV.

Frontispiece—Portrait of Mr. Wilberforce from Sir Thomas Lawrence's Picture.

Specimens of Mr. Wilberforce's Hand-writing. At the end.

VOL. V.

Frontispiece—Portrait of Mr. Wilberforce from Richmond's Picture.

THE

LIFE OF WILBERFORCE.

CHAPTER I.

Birth—Parentage—Education.

WILLIAM WILBERFORCE, only son of Robert Wilberforce and his wife Elizabeth, daughter of Thomas Bird Esq. of Barton, Oxon, was born at Hull upon the feast of St. Bartholomew, August 24, A. D. 1759. He was the third of four children, but of his three sisters the second only arrived at maturity.

His ancestors had long been settled in the county of York. In the reign of the second Henry, Ilgerus de Wilberfoss served in the Scottish wars under Philip de Kyme, with a daughter of whose powerful house he had intermarried. The township of Wilberfoss, eight miles east of York, gave him a mansion and a name; and his property extended to the neighbourhood of Stamford bridge, a spot then famous for the recent battle between Harold and Tosti, the last victory of the last Saxon monarch.

At Wilberfoss the family was fixed for many generations, until, after a gradual decline in wealth and numbers, it disappeared from the place about a century ago.—"Note, that all these," says Robert Glover, Somerset Herald, after enumerating sixteen descents, "did successively succeed as is here set down, and that they did successively occupy the Soake of Cotton which containeth six villages, &c."[1] About the middle of the sixteenth century, the son of William Wilberfoss of Wilberfoss, by his second marriage, settled in the neighbouring town of Beverley. His son appears in the Visitation of 1612 as William Wilberfoss of Brigham: and here and at Beverley the younger branch rose into importance as the parent stock decayed.

William Wilberfoss was mayor of Beverley at the opening of the great rebellion; and the same office was twice filled at Hull, in the succeeding century, by a great-grandson William Wilberfoss, or, as he finally fixed its spelling, Wilberforce; who continued in the Baltic trade, though, besides his patrimonial fortune, he inherited a considerable landed property from his mother, an heiress of the Davye family. He was a man of much repute for talent and integrity; and the settlement of Joseph Milner in the grammar school at Hull is an abiding record of his well-directed influence. Robert, the younger of his two children, father of William Wilberforce, was a partner in the house at Hull; and here was spent the early childhood

[1] Herald's Vis. A. D. 1584.

of his distinguished son. The old man had seen much of life; and one of those tales of travel with which he charmed his grandson is even yet preserved. He had been admitted to the intimacy of the Duke of Marlborough, then commanding the allied armies on the continent; and was invited by that general to witness from the safeguard of a neighbouring eminence the incidents of an approaching battle. Through reluctance to overstep from idle curiosity the strict line of professional duty, enforced perhaps by a careful regard to his personal safety, the offer was prudently declined by the grateful merchant. Upon a more fitting occasion he displayed some military ardour when the arsenal of Hull was prepared for an expected attack in the year 1745.

Of the early years of William Wilberforce little is recorded. His frame from infancy was feeble, his stature small, his eyes weak,. . a failing which with many rich mental endowments he inherited from his mother. It was one amongst the many expressions of his gratitude in after-life "that I was not born in less civilized times, when it would have been thought impossible to rear so delicate a child." But with these bodily infirmities were united a vigorous mind, and a temper eminently affectionate. An unusual thoughtfulness for others marked his youngest childhood: "I shall never forget," says a frequent guest at his mother's, "how he would steal into my sick room, taking off his shoes lest he should disturb me, and with an anxious face looking through my curtains to

learn if I was better." At seven years old he was sent to the grammar school of Hull, of which Joseph Milner was soon afterwards master. "Even then his elocution was so remarkable," says the younger Milner [2] at that time his brother's assistant, "that we used to set him upon a table, and make him read aloud as an example to the other boys." Thus he spent two years, going daily from his father's house to school with his "satchel on his shoulder," and occasionally visiting his grandfather at Ferriby, a pleasant village seven miles distant, on the Humber. The death of his father in the summer of 1768 transferred him to the care of his uncle William Wilberforce; and after a week's residence at Nottingham, [3] he was sent to live with him at Wimbledon and in St. James's Place. Such was then the standard measure of private education, that the school at which he was soon afterwards placed was of the meanest character. "Mr. Chalmers the master, himself a Scotchman, had an usher of the same nation, whose red beard—for he scarcely shaved once a month—I shall never forget. They taught writing, French, arithmetic, and Latin . . with Greek we did not much meddle. It was frequented chiefly by the sons of merchants, and they taught therefore every thing and nothing. Here I continued some time as a parlour boarder: I was sent at first amongst the lodgers, and I can remember even now the nauseous

[2] Isaac Milner, afterwards Dean of Carlisle.

[3] At the house of A. Smith Esq. father to the present Lord Carrington, who had married his mother's sister.

food with which we were supplied, and which I could not eat without sickness."[4]

He remained two years at this school, spending his holidays at his uncle's house, with occasional visits to Nottingham and Hull. He is described at this time as "a fine sharp lad," whose activity and spirit made up in boyish sports for some deficiency of strength. One incident of these years deserves special notice from its assisting, as he thought, to form what was undoubtedly a striking feature in his later character. He received from the late John Thornton, the brother of his aunt, with whom he was travelling, a present much exceeding the usual amount of a boy's possessions, intended to enforce the precept with which it was accompanied, that some should be given to the poor.

When he quitted Hull no great pains had been taken to form his religious principles. His mother indeed was a woman of real excellence, as well as of great and highly cultivated talents, but not possessed at this time of those views of the spiritual nature of religion, which she adopted in later life: "She was what I should call an Archbishop Tillotson Christian."[5] But in his uncle's house he was subjected to a new and powerful influence. His aunt was a great admirer of Whitefield's preaching, and kept up a friendly connexion with the early methodists. The lively affections of his heart, warmed by the kindness of his friends, readily assumed their tone. A stranger[6] has noticed

[4] Conversational Memoranda. [5] Ib.

[6] Private Journal of J. Russel Esq. to whom at this time he sat for

the rare and pleasing character of piety which marked his twelfth year; and there can be little doubt that the acquaintance with holy Scripture and the habits of devotion which he then acquired, fostered that baptismal seed which 'though long dormant was destined to produce at last a golden harvest.

He has himself recorded his deliberate judgment of this early promise. "Under these influences my mind was interested by religious subjects. How far these impressions were genuine I can hardly determine, but at least I may venture to say that I was sincere. There are letters of mine, written at that period, still in existence, which accord much with my present sentiments."[7] . . . "A packet from Hull, enclosing letters of mine from Pocklington school rather too much in the style of the religious letters of that day, and (astonishing!) asking my leave to publish them. As I cannot doubt my having expressed the sentiments and feelings of my heart, I am sensibly impressed with a sense of the dreadful effects of the efforts afterwards used but too successfully to wean me from all religion, and to cherish the love of pleasure and the love of glory in the opening bud of youth."[8]

"How eventful a life," he says in looking back to this period in his thirty-eighth year, "has mine been, and how visibly I can trace the hand of God leading me by ways which I knew not! I think I have never

his picture, and of whom he says afterwards, "Mr. Russel painted my picture for W. Hey. He painted me above thirty years before. A religious man, very high-church indeed." Diary, July 31, 1801.

[7] MS. Memoranda.

[8] Diary, Jan. 1, 1831.

before remarked, that my mother's taking me from my uncle's when about twelve or thirteen and then completely a methodist, has probably been the means of my being connected with political men and becoming useful in life. If I had staid with my uncle I should probably have been a bigoted despised methodist; yet to come to what I am, through so many years of folly as those which elapsed between my last year at school and 1785, is wonderful. Oh the depths of the counsels of God! what cause have I for gratitude and humiliation!"[9]

The symptoms of his changing character were perceived with great alarm at Hull, and it was at once determined that his mother should repair to London, and remove him from the dangerous influence.[10] He returned with her to Yorkshire, quitting his uncle's family with deep regret. His presence had kindled their parental feelings, and he had soon returned them the affection of a son. "I deeply felt the parting for I loved them as parents: indeed, I was almost heart-broken at the separation." "I can never forget you," he wrote to his uncle, "as long as I live."

At twelve years old he returned to his mother's

[9] Journal, April 14, 1797.

[10] His aunt expressed openly her sorrow that he should be removed from the opportunities of a religious life. "You should not fear," replied his mother with a caustic allusion to her peculiar tenets; "if it be a work of grace, you know it cannot fail." "Billy," said his grandfather, "shall travel with Milner as soon as he is of age; but if Billy turns methodist he shall not have a sixpence of mine."

house, where it became the object of his friends by the seductions of gaiety and self-indulgence to charm away that serious spirit which had taken possession of his youthful bosom—

"Et sanctos restinguere fontibus ignes."

The habits of society in Hull assisted their design. "It was then as gay a place as could be found out of London. The theatre, balls, great suppers, and card-parties, were the delight of the principal families in the town. The usual dinner hour was two o'clock, and at six they met at sumptuous suppers. This mode of life was at first distressing to me, but by degrees I acquired a relish for it, and became as thoughtless as the rest. As grandson to one of the principal inhabitants, I was every where invited and caressed: my voice and love of music made me still more acceptable. The religious impressions which I had gained at Wimbledon continued for a considerable time after my return to Hull, but my friends spared no pains to stifle them. I might almost say, that no pious parent ever laboured more to impress a beloved child with sentiments of piety, than they did to give me a taste for the world and its diversions."[11] The strength of principle they had to overcome was indeed remarkable. When first taken to a play, it was almost, he says, by force. At length however they succeeded; and the allurements of worldly pleasure led his youth away from all serious thought. At

[11] MS. Mem.

home there was nothing but gaiety and amusement; at school there was little diligence or restraint. He was placed, soon after his return to Hull, with the Rev. K. Basket, master of the endowed grammar school of Pocklington and formerly Fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge, a man of easy and polished manners, and an elegant though not profound scholar. Here he was treated with unusual liberality; but, especially during the latter part of his stay, he led a life of idleness and pleasure. His talents for general society with his rare skill in singing rendered him every where an acceptable guest, and his time was wasted in a round of visits to the neighbouring gentry. Already however he gave proofs of an active mind, and one remarkable anticipation of his future course is yet remembered. "His abomination of the slave trade," writes a surviving school-fellow,[12] "he evinced when he was not more than fourteen years of age. He boarded in the master's house, where the boys were kept within bounds. I lived in the village. One day he gave me a letter to put into the post office, addressed to the editor of the York paper, which he told me was in condemnation of the odious traffic in human flesh." He cultivated also a taste for literature. "He greatly excelled all the other boys in his compositions, though he seldom began them till the eleventh hour." For his own amusement he committed English poetry to memory,[13]

[12] Rev. T. T. Walmsley, D. D.

[13] Southey remarks of "Beattie's Minstrel"—Life of Cowper, vol. ii.

and he went up to the University "a very fair scholar."

With the self-indulgent habits formed by such a life he entered St. John's College, Cambridge, Oct. 1776, at the age of seventeen years. And here he was at once exposed to new temptations. Left, by the death of his grandfather and uncle, the master of an independent fortune under his mother's sole guardianship, "I was introduced," says he, "on the very first night of my arrival, to as licentious a set of men as can well be conceived. They drank hard, and their conversation was even worse than their lives. I lived amongst them for some time, though I never relished their society, . . often indeed I was horror-struck at their conduct, . . and after the first year I shook off in great measure my connexion with them." For the last two years he spent at Cambridge he was the centre of a higher circle. Amiable animated and hospitable, he was a universal favourite. "There was no one," says the Rev. T. Gisborne, "at all like him for powers of entertainment. Always fond of repartee and discussion, he seemed entirely free from conceit and vanity." He had already commenced the system of frank and simple hospitality, which marked his London life. "There was always a great Yorkshire pie in his rooms, and all were welcome to partake of it. My

p. 180—"No poem has ever given more delight to minds of a certain class, and in a certain stage of their progress, that class a high one and that stage perhaps the most delightful in their pilgrimage."—The "Minstrel" was at this time his especial favourite, and was learnt by heart during his morning walks.

rooms and his were back to back, and often when I was raking out my fire at ten o'clock, I heard his melodious voice calling aloud to me to come and sit with him before I went to bed. It was a dangerous thing to do, for his amusing conversation was sure to keep me up so late, that I was behind-hand the next morning." He lived much at this time amongst the Fellows of the college. "But those," he says, "with whom I was intimate, did not act towards me the part of Christians, or even of honest men. Their object seemed to be, to make and keep me idle. If ever I appeared studious, they would say to me, 'Why in the world should a man of your fortune trouble himself with fagging?' I was a good classic, and acquitted myself well in the college examinations; but mathematics, which my mind greatly needed, I almost entirely neglected, and was told that I was too clever to require them. Whilst my companions were reading hard and attending lectures, card parties and idle amusements consumed my time. The tutors would often say within my hearing, that '*they* were mere saps, but that I did all by talent.' This was poison to a mind constituted like mine." This life of idleness at college was only exchanged in vacation time for the ordinary gaieties of Hull, now increased by the presence of the militia, or for journeys in search of pleasure with his mother and sister. It was surely of God's especial goodness that in such a course he was preserved from profligate excess. For though he could say in after-life, that upon the habits

thus formed by evil influence and unbounded licence "he could not look back without unfeigned remorse," yet he had rather to deplore neglected opportunities of moral and intellectual profit, than vicious practice or abandoned principles.[14]

"I certainly did not then think and act as I do now," he declared long afterwards; "but I was so far from what the world calls licentious, that I was rather complimented on being better than young men in general."

Diligently did he strive in after-years to supply the omissions of his youth; but to the end of life he ceased not to deplore a certain want of mental regularity, which he traced to the neglect of early discipline, and he subsequently remonstrated with the tutor to whose charge he had been confided, on the guilt of suffering those, of whom he was in some sort the guardian, to inflict upon themselves so irreparable an injury. That there was even in this time of thoughtlessness a hidden vein of deeper feeling was shown by his refusing, when unexpectedly required, to declare his assent to the Articles of the church, though the refusal cost him for a time the convenience of an academical degree. Further inquiry removed his hesitation, but he would not at mature age, when his education was completed, declare his concurrence in religious dogmas which he had not examined.[15]

[14] Lord Clarendon, his friend at college and through life, thus describes his conduct. "He had never in the smallest degree a dissolute character, however short his early habits might be of that constant piety and strictness, which was soon perfected in his happy disposition."

[15] A. B. 1781: A. M. 1788. Graduati Cantab.

CHAPTER II.

1780—1783.

Hull election—Wilberforce comes to London—Goostree's—Cured of gambling—Houses at Wimbledon and Rayrigg—Intimacy with Pitt—Lord Camden—Independents—Foreign tour—Rheims—Fontainbleau—Letter to Bankes.

BEFORE he quitted college, Mr. Wilberforce had resolved to enter upon public life. The house which his grandfather had founded at Hull, had been managed for him during his minority by his cousin Abel Smith. But his ample fortune, and a taste for more liberal pursuits, gave a different direction to his thoughts. He declined business, and as a speedy dissolution was expected, commenced a canvass for the representation of his native town in parliament. The intercourse with various characters which our political institutions require from every candidate for popular election, was not lost upon him; and his memory was stored with many anecdotes characteristic of society at that time. "When I first canvassed the town," he has said in conversation, "there lived at Hull a fine athletic fellow, by trade a butcher, named John, or, as he was usually addressed, Johnny

Bell. I rather shrunk from shaking hands with him, saying to one of my staunch supporters, that I thought it going rather too low for votes. 'O sir,' was his reply, 'he is a fine fellow if you come to bruising.' The day following the election he came to me privately and said, 'I have found out who threw the stone at you, and I 'll kill him to-night.' The threat was seriously intended, and I was forced to repress his zeal by suggesting, that it would be too severe a punishment for what had proved, after all, a harmless attempt: 'you must only frighten him.'"[1]

After a successful canvass on the spot, he repaired to London, where about three hundred Hull freemen resided in the vicinity of the river; these he entertained at suppers in the different public houses of Wapping, and by his addresses to them, first gained confidence in public speaking. During this year he resided in lodgings in the Adelphi, and constantly frequented the gallery of the House of Commons. Here he often fell in with Mr. Pitt, then serving the same apprenticeship to public business. They had formed at Cambridge

[1] His conversation has preserved another anecdote, of which Johnny Bell was the hero. While Mr. Thornton sat for Hull, Bell visited London, and called upon the member for his town. A city party dined that day with Mr. Thornton, and as Bell must be unknown to all his guests, Mr. Thornton ventured to invite his townsman to join them. Mr. Bell was introduced at dinner-time, and passed muster admirably. Every thing proceeded smoothly, until, in the course of dinner, the host tendered some apology for the appearance of a joint which Johnny Bell was carving; when, to the dismay of his host, and the amazement of his companions, Johnny, thrown off his guard by professional feeling, exclaimed aloud, "No, Mr. Thornton, there's nought the matter with the beef, I never cut up a finer beast myself."

a slight acquaintance, which now ripened into intimacy. As the summer advanced, he returned to Hull, with the most flattering prospects of success at the ensuing election. His hopes were almost disappointed by a hasty dissolution of the sitting parliament, which would have fixed the day of election before the expiration of his year of nonage, that "piger annus pupillis." The session however survived his birth-day, the feast of St. Bartholomew, which was welcomed by his friends with suitable rejoicings; and the townsmen were regaled with an ox roasted whole in one of his fields. The election opportunely followed; and on the 11th of September he was engaged in all the bustle of a sharp contest. Against him were arrayed the interest of Lord Rockingham, the most powerful nobleman in the county; that of Sir George Savile, its wealthy and respected representative, himself a frequent resident at Hull; and that of government, always strong at a sea-port. To these he could oppose nothing but the personal influence and independent character of a young man of twenty. Yet such was the command he had established over the affections of his townsmen, that, at the close of the poll, he numbered singly as many votes as his opponents had received together. The numbers were,

Lord Robert Manners	673
David Hartley	453
William Wilberforce	1126

This election cost him between £8000 and £9000.

By long-established custom, the single vote of a resident elector was rewarded with a donation of two guineas; four were paid for a plumper; and the expenses of a freeman's journey from London averaged £10 a piece. The letter of the law was not broken, because the money was not paid until the last day on which election petitions could be presented. But the more matured judgment of Mr. Wilberforce condemned the custom to which he now conformed; and rather than so enter parliament, with his later principles, he has declared that he would have remained always a private man. His great success threw no small lustre on his entry into public life; and he was welcomed upon his return to London into every circle. He was at once elected a member of all the leading clubs. "When I went up to Cambridge," he has said, speaking of the risks to which he was then exposed, "I was scarcely acquainted with a single person above the rank of a country gentleman; and even when I left the University, so little did I know of general society, that I came up to London stored with arguments to prove the authenticity of Rowley's Poems; and now I was at once immersed in politics and fashion. The very first time I went to Boodle's I won twenty-five guineas of the Duke of Norfolk. I belonged at this time to five clubs, . . Miles and Evans's, Brookes's, Boodle's, White's, Goostree's. The first time I was at Brookes's, scarcely knowing any one, I joined from mere shyness in play at the Faro table, where George Selwyn kept bank. A

friend who knew my inexperience, and regarded me as a victim decked out for sacrifice, called to me, 'What, Wilberforce, is that you?' Selwyn quite resented the interference, and turning to him, said in his most expressive tone, 'O sir, don't interrupt Mr. Wilberforce, he could not be better employed.' Nothing could be more luxurious than the style of these clubs. Fox, Sheridan, Fitzpatrick, and all your leading men, frequented them, and associated upon the easiest terms; you chatted, played at cards, or gambled as you pleased." Though he visited occasionally these various clubs, his usual resort was with a choicer and more intimate society, who assembled first in the house since occupied by Scrope and Morland's bank, in Pall Mall, and afterwards on the premises of a man named Goostree, now the Shakespeare Gallery.

They were about twenty-five in number,[2] and for the most part were young men who had passed together through the University, and whom the general election of 1780 had brought at the same time into public life. Pitt was an habitual frequenter of the club at Goostree's, supping there every night during the winter of 1780-81. Here their intimacy increased

[2] It consisted of Mr. Pratt, (now Marquis of Camden,) Lords Euston, Chatham, Graham, Duncannon, Althorpe, Apsley, G. Cavendish, and C. Lennox, Mr. Eliot, (elder brother of Lord St. Germains,) St. Andrew (afterwards Lord) St. John, Bridgeman, (afterwards Lord Bradford,) Morris Robinson, (afterwards Lord Rokeby,) R. Smith, (now Lord Carrington,) W. Grenville, (afterwards Lord Grenville,) Pepper Arden, (afterwards Lord Alvanley,) Mr. Edwards, (now Sir Gerard Noel,) Mr. (now Dr.) Marsham, Mr. Pitt, Mr. Wilberforce, Mr. Bankes, Mr. Thomas Steele, General Smith, and after a time Mr. Windham.

every day. Though less formed for general popularity than Fox, Pitt, when free from shyness and amongst his intimate companions, was the very soul of merriment and conversation. "He was the wittiest man I ever knew, and what was quite peculiar to himself, had at all times his wit under entire control. Others appeared struck by the unwonted association of brilliant images; but every possible combination of ideas seemed always present to his mind, and he could at once produce whatever he desired. I was one of those who met to spend an evening in memory of Shakespeare, at the Boar's Head, East Cheap. Many professed wits were present, but Pitt was the most amusing of the party, and the readiest and most apt in the required allusions. He entered with the same energy into all our different amusements; we played a good deal at Goostree's, and I well remember the intense earnestness which he displayed when joining in those games of chance. He perceived their increasing fascination, and soon after suddenly abandoned them for ever."[3]

It was by this vice that he was himself most nearly insnared. A brief diary of this period records more than once the loss of £100 at the Faro table. He was weaned from it in a most characteristic manner. "We can have no play to-night," complained some of the party at the club, "for St. Andrew is not here to keep bank." "Wilberforce," said Mr. Bankes, (who never joined himself,) "if you will keep it I will give

[3] Con. Mem.

you a guinea." The playful challenge was accepted, but as the game grew deep, he rose the winner of £600. Much of this was lost by those who were only heirs to future fortunes, and could not therefore meet such a call without inconvenience. The pain he felt at their annoyance cured him of a taste which seemed but too likely to become predominant.

In spite of his life of gaiety, Mr. Wilberforce attended closely to the House of Commons. He was esteemed a more active member of parliament than any of his predecessors: perhaps the memory of Andrew Marvel had faded from their common birthplace. From the first he was an independent man: he had entered parliament as the opponent of the war with America, and of Lord North's administration; yet to this ministry he gave his first vote, opposing the re-election of Sir Fletcher Norton,[4] as Speaker of the House of Commons.

In January, 1781, he was joined by Mr. Pitt, who having contested Cambridge University without success at the general election, now took his seat for the borough of Appleby. Community of objects naturally increased their friendship; yet not even to friendship with Pitt would he sacrifice his independence. "I well remember," he said long afterwards, "the pain I felt in being obliged to vote against Pitt, the second

[4] "When they were all talking of Sir Fletcher's health requiring his retirement, Rigby came into the House, and said with his ordinary bluntness, 'Don't tell me about health, he has flown in the king's face, and we won't have him.'" Con. Mem.

time he spoke in parliament." Yet though attentive to public business, he did not take an early part in the debates. "Attend to business," he said in later life to a friend[5] entering the House of Commons, "and do not seek occasions of display; if you have a turn for speaking, the proper time will come. Let speaking take care of itself. I never go out of the way to speak, but make myself acquainted with the business, and then if the debate passes my door I step out and join it."

Upon the 31st of April he wrote to a constituent, "Sir George Savile gave notice yesterday, that on Tuesday next he should move that the Delegates'[6] Petition be taken into consideration. The papers would inform you by what a trick it was laid upon the table. The petitioners were said to be private freeholders; and as such were gravely read over the names of Christ. Wyvill, C. Fox, R. Fitzpatrick, &c. They will I doubt not proceed artfully, but let them once but put in their noses in their Delegate capacity, and they will be hunted out as they deserve; and though I will not promise to open, I will accompany the hounds in full cry with my Lord Advocate" [Dundas] "at their head,—and a fine leader of a pack he is."

His first speech was upon the 17th of May, 1781, in a debate upon the laws of revenue, when, having presented a petition from the town of

[5] Sir Thomas Dyke Acland, Bart.

[6] From the Deputies of Associated Counties. Wyvill's Pol. Papers, I. 332.

Hull, he forcibly attacked them as oppressive and unjust.

TO B. B. THOMPSON, ESQ. HULL.

"London, June 9, 1781.

"My dear Thompson,

We have a blessed prospect of sitting till the end of next month. Judge how agreeable this must be to me, who was in the hope ere now to be indulging myself amongst the lakes of Westmoreland. As soon as ever I am released from my parliamentary attendance I mean to betake myself thither, where I expect you and Mrs. T. will make your appearance, and judge how far the country justifies my choice. Between business in the morning and pleasure at night my time is pretty well filled up. Whatever you and Greathed used to say of my idleness, one is, I assure you, as much attended to as the other.

"You say, 'the Lord Advocate will give them a trimming on the India affairs.' I agree with you in thinking him the first speaker on the ministerial side in the House of Commons, and there is a manliness in his character which prevents his running away from the question; he grants all his adversaries' premises, and fights them upon their own ground. The only India affairs we have yet had before us relate to Lord North's claim on the Company of £600,000, and it is not in the power even of the Lord Advocate to put a good face on that transaction. Upon my honour I believe it to be a transaction which, were it to take place

in private life, would be considered as a direct robbery. The matter is too long to be explained in a letter, but we will have some conversation on the subject at Rayrigg, and, to use your own mode of arguing, I will bet you any sum that you will finally be of my opinion.

"The papers will have informed you how Mr. William Pitt, second son of the late Lord Chatham, has distinguished himself; he comes out as his father did a ready-made orator, and I doubt not but that I shall one day or other see him the first man in the country. His famous speech, however, delivered the other night, did not convince me, and I staid in with the old fat fellow:[7] by the way he grows every day fatter, so where he will end I know not.

"My business requires to be transacted at places very distant from each other, and I am now going to call on Lord R. M.[8] thence to Hoxton, and next to Tower Hill; so you may judge how much leisure I have left for letter writing.

"Adieu, give my best respects to Mrs. T. and all friends, and believe me very truly yours,

W. WILBERFORCE."

His landed property in Yorkshire was much scattered, and contained no country mansion. He was therefore left at liberty, when released from parliamentary attendance, to choose his place of residence. His passion for the beauties of scenery and the retire-

[7] Lord North. [8] Lord Robert Manners.

ment of the country, was unusually strong. "When," he has said, "I was much confined in later life to London, I could scarcely leave the country for a town campaign without being affected even to tears."

A visit to a college friend had made him well acquainted with Westmoreland, then little visited by strangers; and for seven years he rented a house at Rayrigg, on the banks of Windermere. Hither he retired with a goodly assortment of books, "classics, statutes at large, and history," as soon as the recess commenced, both in this and the succeeding summer. His studious attentions were however frustrated by the attractions of society. "St. Andrew St. John was with me here for months together during this summer; occasionally too my mother and my sister, and different college friends, joined our party. Boating, riding, and continual parties at my own house and Sir Michael le Fleming's, fully occupied my time until I returned to London in the following autumn."[9]

He took more part this session in general business; and by a speech on the 22nd of February, 1782, against Lord North's administration, obtained the loud commendations of Thomas Townshend. "In 1782," he says, "I first knew Fox well . . he giving us dinners twice or thrice . . very pleasant and unaffected."[10] At the same time he was treated with attention by other members of the new administration. "I was invited to attend at Tommy Townshend's during the formation of the ministry, and can remember when the

[9] MS. Mem. [10] Ib.

jealousy between the Rockingham and Shelburne parties was first betrayed by Fox's awkward manner, when he let out that the king had been seen by no one but Lord Shelburne." [11]

From Lord Rockingham himself he received many civilities, and was amongst his guests shortly before his death. So prevalent at this time was the idea that he was to be included in the new official arrangements, and raised to the Upper House, that he received various applications for the supply of his robes upon that occasion. The death of the Lord Rockingham, in July, 1782, was followed by Mr. Pitt's accession to the Shelburne ministry; and though Mr. Wilberforce, as he at this time assured a friend by letter, would do nothing which obliged him to pledge himself to government, yet he was led to assume a more forward position amongst the general supporters of his friend. They were now united in the closest intimacy. In the course of this spring, they set off for Brighton, to spend the Easter holidays together; and being driven thence on the very night of their arrival, by the inclemency of the weather, proceeded to Bath for the rest of the vacation. "We fixed our quarters at the York House, and as Pitt was then upon the western circuit, he entertained the barristers, Jekyll amongst the rest. We had, too, abundance of corporation dinners and jollity." [12] The early possession of his fortune increased their intimacy, as he was the only member of their set who owned a villa within reach of

[11] MS. Mem. [12] Ib.

London. The house of his late uncle at Wimbledon, with some trifling alteration, gave him the command of eight or nine bed-rooms; and here Pitt, to whom it was a luxury even to sleep in country air, took up not unfrequently his residence: their easy familiarity permitting him to ride down late at night and occupy his rooms, even though the master of the house was kept in town. In one spring Pitt resided there four months, and repaired thither when, in April, 1783, he resigned his official residence to the Coalition ministry.

"Eliot, Arden, and I," writes Pitt one afternoon, "will be with you before curfew, and expect an early meal of peas and strawberries. Bankes, I suppose, will not sleep out of Duke Street, but he has not yet appeared in the

House of Commons,
Half-past four."

On the 11th of December, 1782, Lord Shelburne's ministry met the House of Commons: and throughout the stormy season which followed, Mr. Wilberforce's Diary is full of interesting notices of succeeding incidents.

"Sat. Feb. 15th. Dined Tommy Townshend's. Pitt asked me at night to second the address. Bed at twelve, and sleep disturbed at the thought of a full House of Commons.

"16th. Walked after church till almost four. Dined at home, then called at Pitt's. Went to hear the address read at Tommy Townshend's.

"17th. Walked down morning to House to get Milner into gallery. Seconded the address. Lost the motion by sixteen. Did not leave House till about eight in the morning, and bed about nine."

The treaties for peace upon which this address was moved, were the great measure of the new government. It was the critical moment of the notorious coalition, and when he came down to the House to second the address he inquired of Mr. Bankes, "Are the intentions of Lord North and Fox sufficiently known to be condemned?" "Yes," was the reply, "and the more strongly the better." In his speech accordingly he inveighed against that scandalous intrigue, with a vehemence and force which never forsook him in all his subsequent hostility to party spirit.

"Friday, 21st. Tommy Townshend's. Debate on Lord John's motions, (which condemned the recent treaty). Beat by seventeen. Spoke. Pitt spoke most capitally for two hours and three quarters. Home immediately after the House, and bed a little after four."

This speech he has elsewhere noted as an instance of those amazing powers of mind, which bodily infirmity seemed never to obscure in Mr. Pitt. "Pitt's famous speech on second day's debate—first day's not so good. Spoke three hours, till four in the morning. Stomach disordered, and actually holding Solomon's porch[13] door open with one hand, while vomiting during Fox's speech to whom he was to reply."[14]

[13] Portico behind the old House of Commons. [14] MS. Mem.

" 24th. Dined Pitt's—heard of the very surprising propositions." (The proposal made by the King to Mr. Pitt, that he should form a government.)

" 25th. Ministry still undecided.—28th. Ministers still unappointed. T. Townshend called, and in vain persuaded Pitt to take it.—29th. Morning frosty but extremely fine. Church—Lindsey's—the chariot to Wimbledon. Pitt, &c. to dinner and sleep. Nothing settled.—March 3rd. This evening, or on Sunday evening, the King sent for Lord North, having previously seen Lord Guildford, and they parted on bad terms; Rex refusing to take Charles Fox, and North to give him up.—5th. Dined Independents. King saw North a second time. Both continue stout. —12th. House. Lord Abingdon's concert. Supped at Goostree's, and bed about two. This day Lord North was commissioned, being sent for by the King, to desire the Duke of Portland to form a Ministry. —20th. Dined up-stairs, Bankes, Pepper Arden, &c. then home. Read. My eyes bad. Bed early. The matter said by Lord G. Cavendish and Lord Duncannon to be completely off, by Fox and North not being able to agree about Stormont.—21st. Dined Pitt's. Fox's friends gave up the point of Lord Stormont; and Coke did not make his motion, understanding arrangement likely. Staid at Pitt's till late. —Sunday 23rd. All day at Wimbledon. Eyes indifferent. Sent for Mr. Seymour (afterwards his amanuensis).—24th. Dined Pitt's. All off between the coalition and the King, owing to the one demanding a

complete list, the other refusing it.—31st. Pitt resigned to-day. Dined Pitt's, then Goostree's, where supped. Bed almost three o'clock.—April 3rd. Wimbledon, where Pitt, &c. dined and slept. Evening walk—bed a little past two. 4th. Delicious day,—lounged morning at Wimbledon with friends, *foining* at night, and run about the garden for an hour or two."

Little was it known, by those who saw him only in his public course, that the stiffness of Mr. Pitt's ordinary manner could thus at times unbend, and wanton in these exuberant bursts of natural vivacity. The sports of the rigid Scipio and meditative Lælius in their ungirded hours were equalled by the "foinings" of the garden at Wimbledon, where Pitt's overflowing spirits carried him to every height of jest. "We found one morning the fruits of Pitt's earlier rising in the careful sowing of the garden beds with the fragments of a dress hat, in which Ryder had overnight come down from the opera." It was in this varied and familiar intercourse that their mutual affection was matured; an affection which Mr. Wilberforce retained through life in spite of difference in politics and on yet more important subjects, and the remembrance of which would often cast a momentary sadness over the habitual cheerfulness of his aged countenance.

"Sunday, May 18th. To Wimbledon with Pitt and Eliot, at their persuasion.—26th. House. Spoke. Dined at Lord Advocate's,—Mr. and Mrs. Johnstone, Thurlow, Pepper, Pitt: after the rest went, we sat till six in the morning.—Monday, June 30th.

From Cambridge to London about half-past four. House. Supped at home. Ranelagh, Mrs. Long there with Lord George Gordon.—Sunday, July 6th. Wimbledon. Persuaded Pitt and Pepper to church. —11th. Fine hot day, went on water with Pitt and Eliot fishing, came back, dined, walked evening. Eliot went home, Pitt staid."

This was the most critical period of his course. He had entered in his earliest manhood upon the dissipated scenes of fashionable life, with a large fortune and most acceptable manners. His ready wit, his conversation continually sparkling with polished raillery and courteous repartee, his chastened liveliness, his generous and kindly feelings; all secured him that hazardous applause with which society rewards its ornaments and victims. His rare accomplishment in singing tended to increase his danger. "Wilberforce, we must have you again, the Prince says he will come at any time to hear you sing," was the flattery which he received after his first meeting with the Prince of Wales, in 1782, at the luxurious soirées of Devonshire House.

He was also an admirable mimic, and until reclaimed by the kind severity of the old Lord Camden, would often set the table in a roar by his perfect imitation of Lord North. His affection for Lord Camden was an intimation at this very time of the higher texture of his mind. Often would he steal away from the merriment and light amusements of the gayer circle, to gather wisdom from the weighty words and chosen

anecdotes in which the veteran Chancellor abounded. His affection was warmly returned by Lord Camden, who loved the cheerful earnestness with which he sought for knowledge. "Lord Camden noticed me particularly," he said,[15] "and treated me with great kindness. Amongst other things, he cured me of the dangerous art of mimicry. When invited by my friends to witness my powers of imitation, he at once refused, saying slightingly for me to hear it, 'It is but a vulgar accomplishment.' 'Yes, but it is not imitating the mere manner; Wilberforce says the very thing Lord North would say.' 'Oh,' was his reply, 'every one does that.'" This friendly intercourse was long continued. "How many subjects of politics and religion," writes the old lord, with a pressing invitation to Camden Place, in 1787, "might we not have settled by this time, in the long evenings."

But if he escaped the seductions of frivolity and fashion, he was in equal danger from the severer temptations of ambition. With talents of the highest order, and eloquence surpassed by few, he entered upon public life possessed of the best personal connexions, in his intimate friendship with Mr. Pitt. Disinterested, generous, lively, fond of society, by which he was equally beloved, and overflowing with affection towards his numerous friends, he was indeed in little danger from the low and mercenary spirit of worldly policy. But ambition has inducements for men of every temper; and how far he was then safe

[15] Con Mem.

from its fascinations, may be learned from the conduct of his brother "Independents." They were a club of about forty members of the House of Commons, most of them opponents of the Coalition Ministry, whose principle of union was a resolution to take neither place, pension, nor peerage. Yet in a few years so far had the fierceness of their independence yielded to various temptations, that he and Mr. Bankes alone of all the party retained their early simplicity of station. He himself was the only county member who was not raised to the peerage. He too would no doubt have been entangled in the toils of party, and have failed of those great triumphs he afterwards achieved,[16] but for the entrance into his soul of higher principles. His later journals abound in expressions of thankfulness that he did not at this time enter on official life, and waste his days in the trappings of greatness. Though he was practically thoughtless, ambition had not hardened his heart or destroyed the simplicity of his tastes.

TO MISS WILBERFORCE.

'Wimbledon, June 5, 1783.

"My dear Sister,

From my retirement at Wimbledon, I write to you in your retirement at Drinkston, and I wish you may find as much comfort in the one as I do in the other. The existence I enjoy here is of a sort quite different from what it is in London. I feel a load off my mind;

[16] "After all," said one of the most famous and successful of modern politicians in 1833, "which of *us* shall ever do what he has done?"

nor is it in the mighty powers of Mrs. Siddons, nor in the yet superior and more exalted gratifications of the House of Commons, which you seem to think my summum bonum, to compensate to me for the loss of good air, pleasant walks, and what Milton calls "each rural sight, each rural sound." This you will say is a bigoted attachment, and so perhaps it may be; yet it is an attachment which I strive rather to strengthen than diminish, for, not to observe that it is a natural one, I am sure that I derive from it the most solid and substantial advantages. If my moral and religious principles be such as in these days are not very generally prevalent, perhaps I owe the continuance of them in a great measure to solitude in the country. This is not merely the difference between theory and practice, it is not merely (though that be something) that one finds oneself very well able to resist temptations to vice, when one is out of the way of being exposed to them; but in towns there is no leisure for thought or serious reflection, and we are apt to do that with regard to moral conduct, which we are in vain advised to do in the case of misfortunes—to look only on those who are worse than ourselves, till we flatter ourselves into a favourable opinion of our modes of life, and exalted ideas of our own virtue. But in the country a little reading or reflection presents us with a more complete and finished model, and we become sensible of our own imperfections; need I add that trite maxim, which however I will, for it is a true one, that humility is the surest guide both to virtue

and wisdom. Besides, custom and habit operate almost as powerfully on our opinions and judgments as on our carriage and deportment; and lest we become thoroughly tainted with the fashionable ways of thinking and acting, we should retire to converse and keep company a little with our faithful mentor, who will give us good advice, if we will but have the prudence and the spirit to attend to it. For my own part, I never leave this poor villa without feeling my virtuous affections confirmed and strengthened; and I am afraid it would be in some degree true if I were to add, that I never remain long in London without their being somewhat injured and diminished. After this eulogium on the country, and solitude, you will tell me it is an odd reason I am about to give for having almost laid aside my attention of going abroad, that I cannot find any friend to travel with me; but really the idea is so uncomfortable, of spending three or four weeks alone in a post-chaise, and of not being able to join in the conversation.. when one does at last see the human face divine, that it staggers the resolution to which I had come of *taking a tower;* and my inclination is seconded by my reason, which suggests to me that I can pass my summer to much better advantage in England. Should the latter be my lot, and this word I take to be the properest that can be used on the occasion for it is a good deal a matter of chance, I shall be on the ramble, and endeavour in some of my excursions to show myself not wholly without bowels, and to stumble on you. But of all this I shall be better

able to speak in about three weeks, when I expect parliament will rise, and you must not then be surprised to receive a letter from me dated from any place in or out of his Majesty's dominions."

The close of the session, July 16th, set him at liberty. After visiting the St. Johns at Tunbridge Wells he spent the month of August in Yorkshire, and repaired early in September to the seat of Mr. Bankes in Dorsetshire, to meet Mr. Pitt and Mr. Eliot, with whom he had engaged to pay a visit to the continent. A few days spent at Kingston Hall in shooting, were signalized by the narrow escape of Mr. Pitt from Mr. Wilberforce's gun; "So at least," said he, "my companions affirmed, with a roguish wish, perhaps, to make the most of my shortsightedness and inexperience in field sports."

On the 11th of September the three friends met at Canterbury, and on the following day embarking at Dover in spite of a heavy sea crossed to Calais. Thence they proceeded straight to Rheims, to gain some knowledge of the language before they went to Paris. Each had trusted to the other to obtain the needful introductions; and when at last the omission was discovered they had only time to write to Mr. Robert Smith for letters. He had no better resource than to obtain from Peter Thellusson an introduction to the correspondent of his house. With these credentials they arrived at Rheims, then under that episcopal government which had lasted from the time of Clovis, and to which may be traced, according to

Guizot, the origin of European civilization. At the time of their arrival the Archbishop (Perigord) was absent, and the ordinary routine of government devolved upon Mons. De Lageard, as secretary to the conseil d'état. Their first adventures are thus related in a letter to Mr. Bankes. "From Calais we made directly for Rheims, and the day after our arrival dressed ourselves unusually well, and proceeded to the house of a Mons. Coustier to present, with not a little awe, our only letters of recommendation. It was with some surprise that we found Mons. Coustier behind a counter distributing figs and raisins. I had heard that it was very usual for gentlemen on the continent to practise some handicraft trade or other for their amusement, and therefore for my own part I concluded that his taste was in the fig way, and that he was only playing at grocer for his diversion; and viewing the matter in this light, I could not help admiring the excellence of his imitation; but we soon found that Mons. Coustier was a 'véritable epicier,' and that not a very eminent one. He was very fair and candid however, and acknowledged to us that he was not acquainted with any of the gentry of the place, and therefore could not introduce us to them. We returned to our inn, and after spending nine or ten days without making any great progress in the French language, which could not indeed be expected from us, as we spoke to no human being but each other and our Irish courier, when we began to entertain serious thoughts of leaving the place in despair, by

way of a parting effort we waited on our epicier, and prevailed on him to put on a bag and sword and carry us to the intendant of the police, whom he supplied with groceries. This scheme succeeded admirably. The intendant was extremely civil to us, and introduced us to the Archbishop, who gave us two very good and pleasant dinners and would have had us stay a week with him. (N. B. Archbishops in England are not like Archevêques in France; these last are jolly fellows of about forty years of age, who play at billiards, &c. like other people.)

"We soon got acquainted with as many of the inhabitants as we could wish, especially an Abbé De Lageard, a fellow of infinite humour, and of such extraordinary humanity, that to prevent our time hanging heavy on our hands he would sometimes make us visits of five or six hours at a stretch. Our last week passed very pleasantly, and for myself I was really very sorry when the day arrived for our setting off for Paris."

The Abbé De Lageard (now Mons. de Cherval) has furnished some recollections of this visit. "One morning when the intendant of police brought me his daily report, he informed me, there are three Englishmen here of very suspicious character. They are in a wretched lodging, they have no attendance, yet their courier says, that they are 'grands seigneurs,' and that one of them is son of the great Chatham; but it is impossible, they must be 'des intrigants.' I had been in England, and knew that the younger sons of your noble families are not always wealthy, and I said

to Mons. Du Chatel, who wished to visit them officially and investigate their character, 'Let us be in no hurry, it may be perhaps as they represent, I will inquire about them myself.' I went to their lodgings the same evening and got their names from the courier, and true enough they were said to be Mr. W. Pitt, Mr. Wilberforce, and Mr. Eliot, all three members of the British parliament, and one of them lately a leading member of the government. The next morning I visited them, and as I was at once satisfied by their appearance I asked whether I could be of any use to them, and offered whatever the town of Rheims could afford for their amusement. Amongst other things Mr. Pitt complained, 'Here we are in the middle of Champagne, and we cannot get any tolerable wine.' 'Dine with me to-morrow,' I replied, 'and you shall have the best wine the country can afford.' They came and dined with me, and instead of moving directly after dinner, as we do in France, we sat talking for five or six hours."

The Abbé De Lageard, a man of family and fortune, was one of those whom the revolution stripped of every thing but their faith and loyalty; and when residing as an emigrant in England, he received from Mr. Wilberforce a willing and ample return of his present hospitality. Nothing could exceed his kindness to them: for a fortnight he was their constant attendant; he made them acquainted with the noblesse who resided in the neighbourhood of Rheims; he gave them permission to sport over the domain of the

Archbishop; and upon his return, introduced them to a familiar footing at the palace. In their many conversations with the Abbé, Mr. Pitt was the chief speaker. Although no master of the French vocabulary, his ear, quick for every sound but music, caught readily the intonations of the language; and he soon spoke it with considerable accuracy. He inquired carefully into the political institutions of the French; and the Abbé has stored up his concluding sentence.. "Monsieur, vous n'avez point de liberté politique, mais pour la liberté civile, vous en avez plus que vous ne croyez."

As he expressed in the strongest terms his admiration for the system which prevailed at home, the Abbé was led to ask him, since all human things were perishable, in what part the British constitution might be first expected to decay? Pitt, a parliamentary reformer, and speaking within three years of the time when the House of Commons had agreed to Mr. Dunning's motion, that the influence of the Crown had increased, was increasing, and ought to be diminished, after musing for a moment, answered; "The part of our constitution which will first perish, is the prerogative of the King, and the authority of the House of Peers." "I am greatly surprised," said the Abbé, "that a country so moral as England can submit to be governed by a man so wanting in private character as Fox; it seems to show you to be less moral than you appear." "C'est que vous n'avez pas été sous la baguette du Magicien," was Pitt's reply; "but the

remark," he continued, "is just." Through the Abbé's kindness they mixed familiarly with different ranks, and saw much of the interior of French society.

"Oct. 3rd. Dined at Vallery — La Marechale d'Etrées, &c." A following entertainment at the house of a wealthy wine merchant of Rheims is described as "a sad party—drunken prior—sang—seventy-three [years old]."—At this house they witnessed an amusing estimate of English appetite. Whilst the Frenchmen did ample justice to an abundant supper, the three friends ate rather sparingly. Their host attributed their moderation to their disinclination to the light dishes of which the repast consisted, and significantly hinted that their taste would soon be gratified. A vast joint of ill-roasted beef, which was placed upon the table amongst the winks and smiles of the company, soon fulfilled his promise; and though the Englishmen could not be persuaded to touch it, their friends retired with the conviction, that if they had been free from observation they would have liberally indulged in their national fare.

The position Mr. Pitt had occupied at home, attracted the observation of the French. An aged Marechale at Rheims sought in him a purchaser for her most costly wines, and disclaimed earnestly his assurances of poverty. "Le ministre doit avoir, sans doute, cinque ou six mille livres sterling de rente." And at Paris, whither they removed upon the 9th of September, it was hinted to him through the intervention of Horace Walpole, that he would be an

acceptable suitor, for the daughter of the celebrated Neckar. Neckar is said to have offered to endow her with a fortune of £14,000 per annum: but Mr. Pitt replied, "I am already married to my country." The story of their embarrassments at Rheims preceded them to Fontainbleau, where, by special invitation, they soon joined the gala festivities of the court, and Mr. Pitt was often rallied by the Queen, who asked whether he had lately heard from his friend the epicier.

The diary of this period gives a brief notice of each day's proceedings.

"Oct. 16th. Breakfasted at home, dressed by eleven, and went with ambassador. Introduced to King, Queen, Monsieur, Madame, Compte and Comptesse D'Artois, and two aunts. Dined Mons. de Castries, minister of the marine department. Saw there Vicomte de Noailles pleasant fellow, and Marquis de la Fayette, Chaillière, Castries's son and his wife. Marmontel there. After dinner went to Vergenne's, and then to Madame Polignac's to visit the Queen; she chatted easily. Then salle des ambassadeurs, and opera:—words by Marmontel, music by Piccini; both good—Didon. Then supped at Count Donson's. Round table: all English but Donson, Noailles, Dupont. Queen came after supper. Cards, trictrac, and backgammon, which Artois, Lauzun, and Chartres played extremely well. Home at one."

"Oct. 17th. Morning—Pitt stag hunting. Eliot and I in chaise to see King. Clumsy, strange figure in immense boots. Dined home—then play. Ma-

dame Gazon in Babet in Droit de Seigneur. Then home, and supped Castries's, at small table very rudely.[17] Afterwards to Polignac's to the Queen, who came there after supper—billiards. Home, where lounged till almost three o'clock.

" 18th. Morning foggy. Called Manchester's. Dined home—Eliot. The boar hunting. After dinner called Vergenne's. Supped Seguiers. Afterwards Lamballe's, where the Queen. Great assembly —billiards.

" 19th. Up early. Returned to Paris. Dined Walpole's. Then home.

" 20th. Saw sights. Bought books. Dined Marquis de la Fayette's, pleasing enthusiastical man: his wife a sweet woman. Dr. Franklin, Mr. Page, Crillon's aid du camp, young Franklin, Noailles, Madame Boufflers there. Free the Spanish colonies. At home at night preparing for departure."

Mr. Wilberforce received with interest the hearty greetings which Dr. Franklin tendered to a rising member of the English parliament, who had opposed the war with America. But it was the singular position occupied by La Fayette which most of all attracted his attention: he seemed to be the representative of the democracy in the very presence of the monarch, the tribune intruding with his

[17] The English then at Fontainbleau made a considerable party, and instead of mingling with their hosts, they assembled at a separate table, headed by their ambassador, (the Duke of Manchester,) to discuss English politics in their own language.

veto within the chamber of the patrician order. His own establishment was formed upon the English model; and amidst the gaiety and ease of Fontainbleau, he assumed an air of republican austerity. When the fine ladies of the court would attempt to drag him to the card table, he shrugged his shoulders, with an affected contempt for the customs and amusements of the old regime. Meanwhile the deference which this champion of a new state of things received, above all from the ladies of the court, intimated clearly the disturbance of the social atmosphere, and presaged the coming tempest. A special messenger recalling Mr. Pitt to London, cut short their further observations; and after a six weeks' absence Mr. Wilberforce returned to England on the 24th October, "better pleased with his own country than before he left it." He thus reports to Mr. Bankes his foreign operations in a letter, part of which has been already given.

TO HENRY BANKES, ESQ.

"London, 28th Oct. 1783.

"My dear Bankes,

You would have good reason to complain of my having forgotten the promise of giving you an account of our continental proceedings, which I made you as I was dolefully walking down-stairs to step into my 'post-chay' at Kingston Hall, if I had it not in my power to assure you that it was the weakness of my eyes alone which was the occasion of my silence;

for a fortnight or three weeks I got up constantly with a determination to write to you, which this complaint as constantly obliged me to break. We have with some difficulty escaped with our lives from the complicated miseries of incessant travelling from Paris, which I shall not attempt to describe to you, who know what it is to spend four-and-twenty hours together in a carriage, and are no strangers to the horrors of sea-sickness. I assure you it was with no small joy, after all my perils by land and water, that I found myself at my lodgings in Little Conduit Street.

"As we shall meet in a fortnight, and have an opportunity of reading over together the journal of our tour, I shall not send it you at present, but only mention some of the great features of it. From Calais we made directly for Rheims, &c. p. 34.

"At Paris we staid nearly a week,[18] and from the swarms of English, we should not have found out that we were out of London, except from the circumstance of our going every night to a play, of which we were not able to make out a syllable. But *it was not to see sights that we went abroad, but to study the people;* and it was not in the power of the amusements of Paris to detain us long from Fontainbleau, where the court is spending a month of gala; and where, in four

[18] At Paris, Mr. Pitt first became acquainted with Mr. Rose, then travelling with Lord Thurlow. This circumstance gave occasion, perhaps, to Sir Nathaniel Wraxall's misstatement, that Mr. Pitt and Mr. Rose were fellow-travellers on the continent. He adds, that he had met them together at Antwerp, a place which Mr. Pitt never visited, having reached Rheims by way of St. Omers, Arras, Cambray, St. Quentin, and Laon, and returned straight from Paris.

days, the time of our stay, we had an opportunity of seeing as many people of distinction as we could have done in a month in Paris. Here we dined and supped with ministers, and every night we spent with the Queen, who is a monarch of most engaging manners and appearance. The King is so strange a being, (of the hog kind,) that it is worth going a hundred miles for a sight of him, especially a boar hunting. They all, men and women, crowded round Pitt in shoals; and he behaved with great spirit, though he was sometimes a little bored when they talked to him about the parliamentary reform. They are certainly, we have every reason to say, a most obliging people; and we all returned from Fontainbleau charmed with our reception. I hope you will come in a few days, and see our improvement by foreign travel.

I am ever yours,

W. WILBERFORCE."

CHAPTER III.

1783-4.

FIRST ELECTION FOR YORKSHIRE.

State of parties in the autumn of 1783—Diary—Meeting at York against the coalition—Dissolution of parliament—Yorkshire election—Wilberforce suddenly proposed to represent the county—Elected for Hull—Nomination for the county—Elected member—Letter from Pitt—Effect of this election on the country.

THE month of November, 1783, when Mr. Wilberforce returned to London, was a season of great political excitement. "Returned," he says,[1] "to England in November, and secret plottings. The King groaning under the ministry which had been imposed upon him. Difference about provision for Prince of Wales, when ministry gave up the measure rather than their places. —Afterwards Fox's India Bill, which thrown out—Lord Temple's fracas, and long interregnum—at length Pitt prime minister." Then came that memorable season, when one man swayed the destinies of a people; when Pitt, undismayed by threats and unincensed by provocations, upheld with a strong hand and a bold heart the prerogatives of the Crown and the liberties of the subject. Throughout this period

[1] MS. Mem.

Mr. Wilberforce shared constantly in the private counsels and parliamentary labours of his friend. The part he took in these debates attracted more notice than any of his previous speeches; and the opposition papers of the day defy Mr. Pitt "in spite of the assistance he receives from the eloquence of Mr. Wilberforce."

The Diary of this period is full of interesting allusions to the progress of affairs.

"Oct. 25th. Travelled all day—at London about one o'clock in the morning. Supped Goostree's—bed half-past three.

"28th. Kemble, Hamlet—and Goostree's.

"Nov. 1st. Wimbledon. Pitt and Eliot came in at four——dined and slept.

"2nd. Pitt staid all day.

"3rd. They left me—alone—read.

"8th. Sat. Eliot and Pitt came to dinner; and all night.

"9th. Pepper and John Villiers came, and staid all night. Pitt and Eliot left after dinner.

"11th. House (met)—up at six. Dined Goostree's—play. Begun hard at Reports.

"13th. House—Reports. Supped Edwards's—Ramsay, negroes.

"15th. Dined Baxter's—Johnians.

"16th. Did not go to Wimbledon—Cambridge election.

"17th. Pitt went to Cambridge to meet Euston. Went to Surrey nomination meeting.

"18th. House—Fox's India Motion. Express from Euston that the Duke would not let him stand. Debate about Pitt—Bankes. Determined he should not stand.[1]

"20th. House—spirited debate about putting off India Bill. Dined Goostree's.

"24th. Dined R. Smith's. Night, Pitt's India people.

"27th. Great day in the House. Sat till past four in the morning.

"28th. No House. Dined Tom Pitt's—Mrs. Crewe—charming woman.

"29th. Went to see Mrs. Siddons—Mrs. Crewe at play.

"30th. Dined Lord Chatham's—meeting. Wrote for ladies to go to the gallery, but disappointed.

"Dec. 1st. House—late night. Home about five, immediately after debate. Fox spoke wonderfully.

"2nd. Catch-club—Sandwich—then opera. Mrs. Crewe there. Supped Lord George's. Lord John there—Mrs. Crewe—Duchess of Portland—converts. Mrs. Crewé made the party [promise] to adjourn to Downing Street next night.

"3rd. Dined Goostree's. Supped Duchess of Portland's, Downing Street. Charles Fox came in—whispering over chair. Heavy evening.

"4th. House. Supped tête-à-tête Lord and Lady Chatham.

"6th. Dined Hamilton's—opera. Supped Burling-

[1] Mr. Mansfield (Solicitor-General) was re-elected.

ton House — Mrs. Crewe — Duchess of Portland. Mrs. Sheridan sang old English songs angelically— promised her our votes.

" 7th. Church — Lock — De Coetlegan — then Goostree's.

" 8th. House sat till near four. Spoke ill—confused.

" 16th. House—resolutions relative to King's interference. Home late.

" 19th. Pitt, Lord Temple, Thurlow, accepted.

" 20th. Morning Pitt's.

" 21st. Pitt's—supped Lord Chatham's.

" 22nd. Lord Temple resigned. No dissolution declared. Drove about for Pitt.—'So your friend Mr. Pitt means to come in,' said Mrs. Crewe;[3] 'well, he may do what he likes during the holidays, but it will only be a mince-pie administration, depend on it.'

" 23rd. Morning Pitt's. Dined Sir C. Middleton's. Pitt nobly firm. Evening Pitt's. Cabinet formed."—" We had a great meeting that night of all Pitt's friends in Downing Street. As Pratt, Tom Steele, and I were going up to it in a hackney coach from the House of Commons, 'Pitt must take care,' I said, 'whom he makes Secretary of the Treasury; it is rather a roguish office.' 'Mind what you say,' answered Steele, 'for I am Secretary of the Treasury.' At Pitt's we had a long discussion; and I remember well the great penetration showed by Lord Mahon.

[3] MS. Mem.

'What am I to do,' said Pitt, 'if they stop the supplies.' 'They will not stop them,' said Mahon, 'it is the very thing which they will not venture to do."

"24th. House—spoke very well.

"25th. Dined Lord Chatham's.

"26th. Pitt's.

"Jan. 1st, 1784. After breakfast to Cambridge—Comb^{n}. room. Townshend asked me if Pitt would stand.[4]

"3rd. Set off for Exton—where got late and slept.

"4th. In vain pressed Mr. Noel to attend Monday, 12th.

"20th. House—coalition talked of. Dined Independents'—opera—and supped Goostree's.

"23rd. House—Pitt's Bill—up at three.

"29th. Dined White's by way of forming a club.

"Feb. 2nd. House till twelve. Then home and dreamed about debate.

"10th. White's to ballot for a committee. Supped there. Wanted, but in vain, old North to come in.

"22nd. Dined G. Hardinge's. Mrs. Siddons sung charmingly.

"24th. Lady Howe's ball—danced till half-past four.

"25th. They put off the House by a trick. Address carried up.

[4] At the ensuing general election, Mr. Pitt and Lord Euston were returned for the University of Cambridge in the place of Messrs. Townshend and Mansfield.

"26th. Dined at Lord Chatham's to settle about the 25.

"28th. Pitt returned from city. Affray—he got safe into White's. Called there—and bed about three o'clock.

"March 1st. Spoke—at night to Dundas's—extremely tired.

"4th. Dined D'Adhemar's—French ambassador. Called White's—settled the 25.

"6th. Pitt bolted in.

"7th. Sunday—morning church. Dined Lord Salisbury's.—Then with Dundas to Mr. Seaton's to sup with Mrs. Siddons.

"12th. House till eleven—Parliamentary Reform.

"17th. Came to town. Dined Lord Bulkeley's. Then Pitt's, where supped."

"I can well remember," he has said of this important crisis, "how anxiously we watched the events of each succeeding day, counting every vote, in the earnest hope that Pitt might make a successful stand against the coalition." But the time was now come, when he could render more essential service to his friend, than by beating up the quarters of doubtful members, or even by supporting him with his eloquence in the House of Commons.

The rising feeling of the country in support of Mr. Pitt, had been already shown in the many urgent addresses presented to the King. But Yorkshire had not as yet declared itself; and the supporters of the coalition, calculating upon the influence of their vast

possessions in the county, looked eagerly for its declaration in their favour. "Great head," say the papers[5] of the day, "is making in Yorkshire against the address to be proposed there on the 28th; the Fitzwilliams and Cavendishes are all gone down, and are busy in their canvass. Their success in Yorkshire is now the sheet-anchor of the coalition. An address from that populous and extensive county would prove a death-blow to their future hopes. Their agents and emissaries, therefore, are driving about from place to place, day and night. Some of their ablest hands are employed in this important service. As some principals of their party have so great an interest in the county, a failure there would entirely blow up their cause; and besides, the example of Yorkshire could not fail to determine other counties, which have not yet addressed." To this overbearing influence, there was a strong spirit of opposition in the county. The West Riding clothiers were all Tories, and ready to rise in support of the throne. The Yorkshire Association declared against the coalition. It had been formed in 1779, from the gentry of moderate fortunes and the more substantial yeomen, under the pressure of those burdens which resulted from the war with America, with the view of obtaining, first an economical, and then a parliamentary, reform. But in the various changes which soon afterwards perplexed the political world, its first object was almost forgotten; and its most important character was the front of opposition,

[5] Public Advertiser, March 18th and 19th.

which it now maintained against that powerful aristocracy, which had long ruled the county with absolute dominion. To the general hostility to the coalition, Yorkshire therefore added a peculiar element of opposition. In contending with the great Whig lords, she fought the battle of her own freedom, as well as of political right. The sturdy yeomen of the north, like their forefathers, might be influenced, but could not be compelled, "Jam domiti ut pareant nondum ut serviant." They gathered round the Association, and formed a union of all the middle classes against the great barons of the county. The castle yard at York was to be their Runnymede, and the address their Magna Charta.

Yet so undisputed hitherto had been the rule against which they were about to rise, that in spite of this state of feeling, Mr. Wilberforce declared, three days before the county meeting, "I hope we may be able to get up an opposition in Yorkshire, though I doubt whether it be possible." He had determined upon making the attempt, and though the poet Mason, then a canon residentiary at York, was well nigh his sole acquaintance beyond his own corner of the county, he hastened into Yorkshire to head the party. On the 21st of March he went as far as Cambridge, and reached York the following afternoon at four o'clock. "Dressed," says his Diary, "and went and supped at York Tavern. Lord Falconberg, Wyvill, and I, helped to draw up an address—Mason, &c.

"24th. Up early—at York Tavern—and walking all day. Numbers came to York.

"25th. Cold hailing day. Castle yard meeting from ten till half-past four. Messenger came to me there."

"In those days," he has said,[6] "they kept up a vast deal of state, and the great men all drove up in their coaches and six. An immense body of the freeholders was present. It was a wonderful meeting for order and fair hearing." An address to the King condemning the coalition ministry, was proposed by Mr. Buck, Recorder of Leeds, and supported by Mr. H. Duncombe, Mr. Baynes, Mr. Milnes, Mr. Stanhope, and Lord Fauconberg. On the other side appeared the late Duke of Norfolk, (then Lord Surrey,) Lord Carlisle, Lord John Cavendish, Lord Fitzwilliam, and many other men of rank and influence. When the proposers of the address had spoken, and the Whig lords had been heard in answer, the day was far advanced, and the listeners were growing weary of the contest. At this time Mr. Wilberforce mounted the table, from which, under a great wooden canopy before the high sheriff's chair, the various speakers had addressed the meeting. The weather was so bad "that it seemed," says an eye-witness, "as if his slight frame would be unable to make head against its violence." The castle yard, too, was so crowded, that men of the greatest physical powers had been scarcely audible. Yet such was the magic of his voice and the grace of his expression, that by his very first sentence he arrest-

[6] MS. Mem.

ed, and for above an hour he continued to enchain the attention of the surrounding multitude. "Danby tells me," writes Pepper Arden, "that you spoke like an angel. That, indeed, I hear from many others." The disadvantage under which his figure had at first appeared, from the scale and construction of the hustings, was soon forgotten in the force and animation of his manner.—"I saw," said Boswell,[7] describing the meeting to Dundas, "what seemed a mere shrimp mount upon the table; but, as I listened, he grew, and grew, until the shrimp became a whale." "It is impossible," says one who heard him, "though at the distance of so many years, to forget his speech, or the effect which it produced. He arraigned with the utmost vigour the coalition ministry, and the India Bill which they had proposed . . a measure which he described as 'the offspring of that unnatural conjunction, marked with the features of both its parents, bearing token to the violence of the one, and the corruption of the other.'"—"His argumentative and eloquent speech," says a York paper of the day, "was listened to with the most eager attention, and received with the loudest acclamations of applause. It was a reply to all that had been urged against the address; but there was such an excellent choice of expressions, so rapidly pronounced, that we are unable to do it

[7] "I rejoice in the happy prospect of things with you," writes Mr. Dundas from Edinburgh to Mr. Wilberforce, March 30th. "Boswell has just been with me, and gives me an account of your feats at York."

justice in any account we can give of it." He was distinctly heard to the utmost limits of the crowd, and interrupted only by an express from Mr. Pitt, which without disconcerting him, enabled him with the greatest possible effect to announce to the assembled county, that by dissolving parliament, the King had at that very moment appealed to the decision of the nation.

TO WILLIAM WILBERFORCE, ESQ.

"Dear Wilberforce,

Parliament will be prorogued to-day, and dissolved to-morrow. The latter operation has been in some danger of delay, by a curious manœuvre, that of stealing the great seal last night from the Chancellor's; but we shall have a new one ready in time.

"I send you a copy of the speech which will be made in two hours from the throne. You may speak of it in the *past* tense, instead of the *future*.

"A letter accompanies this from Lord Mahon to Wyvill, which you will be so good as to give him.—I am told Sir Robert Hildyard is the right candidate for the county.—You must take care to keep all our friends together, and to tear *the enemy to pieces*.

"I set out this evening for Cambridge, where I expect, notwithstanding your boding, to find every

thing favourable. I am sure however of a retreat at Bath.

Ever faithfully yours,

W. PITT.

"Downing Street,
Wednesday, March 24th, half-past twelve.

"Our prospect as to elections improves every hour."

"At the commencement of the meeting," he has said, "the two parties opposed to Mr. Fox were themselves divided, and I was able to unite them. I had considered the subject carefully, and what I said made a great impression." The sheriff, W. Danby, Esq. could not decide positively on the result of a division, but as the address was carried by a show of hands, it was signed by him as the decision of the meeting, and presented to the King. "The honest independent freeholders of that great county," says the Public Advertiser, "looked the Duke of Devonshire, Lord John Cavendish, the Earls of Carlisle and Fitzwilliam, — the face; and against that mighty aristocracy voted a loyal address to their Sovereign."

The great ability which he had thus displayed before the county, produced the most unexpected consequences. The immense expense of contesting its representation had reduced Yorkshire to the condition of a nomination borough in the hands of the Whig nobility. "Hitherto," said its popular representative Sir George Savile, when in 1780 he was supported by the Yorkshire Association, before which

his colleague had given place to Mr. Henry Duncombe, "hitherto I have been elected in Lord Rockingham's dining-room—now I am returned by my constituents." "To get up an opposition" at the approaching election had been one end of Mr. Wilberforce's presence. And he himself, warned doubtless by that internal consciousness of power, by which great men are prepared for high attempts, had already secretly presaged the actual issue.

[8]"I had formed within my own heart the project of standing for the county. To any one besides myself I was aware that it must appear so mad a scheme, that I never mentioned it to Mr. Pitt, or any of my political connexions. It was undoubtedly a bold idea, but I was then very ambitious.[9] However, entertaining it, I carefully prepared myself for the public debate, which was soon to follow in the face of the whole county; and both at the public meeting, and in the subsequent discussions, it was this idea which regulated the line, as well as animated the spirit, of my exertions. All circumstances indeed considered . . my mercantile origin, my want of connexion or acquaintance with any of the nobility or gentry of Yorkshire . . my being elected for that great county appears to me, upon the retrospect, so utterly improbable, that I cannot but ascribe it to a providential intimation, that the idea of

[8] MS. Mem.

[9] "Notables in my life. My being raised to my present situation just before I became acquainted with the truth, and one year and a half before I in any degree experienced its power. This, humanly speaking, would not have taken place afterwards." Journal, September 4th, 1796.

my obtaining that high honour suggested itself to my imagination, and in fact fixed itself within my mind."

"Great as our majority may be at the county meeting," writes Mr. Wyvill,[10] "what friend have we to propose, who could hazard the expense of a contest, or what probability is there that any candidate would be supported by a subscription." Sir Christopher Sykes (one of the wealthiest members of the Association) had been the only person announced in the county papers as a possible candidate. But events were advancing to a different issue. Whilst he was yet speaking in the castle yard, the admiration of the freeholders burst forth in the shout, "We 'll have this man for our county member;" and his conduct in the succeeding meetings suggested the same idea to independent men of greater influence.

"The meeting in the castle yard was followed by a great public dinner of our side, at the York Tavern. The Foxites met at Bluitt's. In the evening, when they were all half tipsy, I made up a quarrel which had broken out between associators and non-associators, Whigs and Tories. Whigs, Lord Effingham, &c. Tories, West Riding clothiers. Already some were saying, 'We can't agree—we had better separate;' but I united them again, by showing them the folly of giving up our common object because there were differences between us, and by reminding them of the great constitutional principles which we all maintained. This confirmed the disposition to propose me

[10] Letter to Rev. W. Mason, Feb. 28, 1784.

for the county, an idea which had begun to be buzzed about at dinner, amongst all ranks."[11] "Mr. Wilberforce," wrote one of the company to Lord Hawke, "has gained the hearts and admiration of all that heard him speak; and when we broke up at the York Tavern, at twelve o'clock on Thursday night, there was a sudden and spontaneous cry of 'Wilberforce and liberty,' which was his first nomination for the county."

"Thursday, 25th March. Dined at the York Tavern—sat late. Non-associators and associators quarrelled—reconciled them. At the end of my speech they declared (Pierse, Morritt, Athorpe, &c.) I should be their member—Lord Fauconberg had mentioned it to me at dinner.

"26th. Meeting called at York Tavern. Message from Bluitt's, about supporting any one, if we would support Foljambe—our answer. Stanhope, Fauconberg, &c. mentioned me. Sir Robert Hildyard spoke. —I speechified again—and they agreed, that all should separately sound their neighbours, and come with the result to the county meeting about a week afterwards, so putting off the determination concerning me till the nomination."[12]

Strong as was now the feeling in his favour, it seemed a thing so incredible, that a young man, utterly unconnected with the aristocracy of the county, should actually displace their nominee, that it was not deemed safe for him to resign his present seat. On the evening therefore of the 26th, he "set

[11] MS. Mem [12] Diary.

off to secure his election at Hull, where " he " arrived at two o'clock in the morning."

" 27th. Canvassed the York voters, and got them all for Galway and Milnes. People not pleased at my not canvassing.

" Friday, 28th. Morning busy—made some calls.

" 29th. Began canvass, which continued till night. Hartley drawn into the town.

" 30th. Canvass all day—extremely hard work—till night—tired to death.

" 31st. Morning—election went on well. At three, poll interrupted—Hartley desired in vain by friends to give up.

" April 1st. Hartley declined—election went on. Snow-balls, &c. thrown at me in the chair." [13] This slight expression of resentment was aimed at his intended resignation of his seat, if elected for the county. " But when," says an eye-witness, " the procession reached his mother's house, he sprung from the chair, and presenting himself with surprising quickness at a projecting window . . it was that of the nursery in which his childhood had been passed . . he addressed the populace with such complete effect, that he was able afterwards to decide the election of his successor."

The same evening he was on his road to York.

" April 7th. At night went to Market Weighton, twenty-one miles—crowds—orgies in Beverley.

[13] At the close of the poll the numbers stood, W. Wilberforce 807, S. Thornton 751, D. Hartley 357.

"8th. Up early—to York—nomination day."

He found a welcome greeting upon reaching York; and was immediately proposed with Mr. Duncombe, in opposition to Mr. Weddell and Mr. Foljambe, both men of large fortune and great connexions, and one [14] the former member, and heir to the influence of his uncle Sir George Savile.

The brunt of opposition was of course directed against the new candidate; whom Lord Mulgrave recommended to the freeholders as "approved already by a large part of the county, the bosom friend of the present minister, and second only to him in eloquence, unexampled at their years." "It was a great meeting for the nomination, in a long room between the courts; the speakers mounted on a table, and haranguing thence. I replying to lawyer Hill of Tadcaster." [15] This speech in a vein of cutting sarcasm, of which in after-life he would never allow himself the use, "I well remember," says one who heard it, "for the hearty mirth which its powers of ridicule excited." The show of hands was, by a "vast majority," in favour of himself and Mr. Duncombe; and the reports made upon the day of nomination, as the result of local canvassing, gave them a return of promises, [16] as three or four to one. To

[14] Mr. Wilberforce would often mention with peculiar pleasure the generous feeling with which, at a subsequent election, Mr. Foljambe came to York, as one of his supporters.

[15] MS. Mem.

[16] An exact revision of the county, by which the names, residences, and possessions of every freeholder were ascertained, showed that whilst there were doubtful, or against them, 2510 votes, no less than 11,173 were promised to the two independent candidates.

meet the anticipated charge of such a contest, a subscription was immediately commenced, to which the candidates in vain requested leave to add £2000 a-piece. Of the sum thus contributed, (£18,670,) about one fourth proved sufficient to defray the whole expense of the election.

From the hall of nomination the candidates passed to another public dinner at the York Tavern; and on the following morning set out to spend in a hasty personal canvass the four days which preceded the election. Their road by Doncaster led them through a hostile neighbourhood. "We passed many great houses that morning, but not one did we see that was friendly to us. 'This looks very ill,' was my remark to Duncombe." But with night their tide of popularity set in.

"April 3rd. To Rotherham—drawn into town—public dinner. At night to Sheffield—vast support—meeting at Cutlers' Hall.

"4th. Off to Barnsley. Honest Edmunds of Worsborough, in sight of Lord Fitzwilliam's, but a warm friend. Then to Wakefield, where slept.

"5th. Canvassed. Then off to Halifax. Drawn into town. One hundred people dined with us. Speechified at the other house after dinner—warm friends. After dinner (drunken postboy) to Bradford. Drawn into town—vast support. Then on to Leeds, and bed.

"6th. Wonderful cloth halls—kindly received. At York tavern—Lord John Cavendish and Sir W.

Milner beat. At eight o'clock a message from Bluitt's, saying Foljambe and Weddell decline. Wrote number of letters.

"7th. Up early—breakfasted tavern—rode frisky horse to castle — elected — chaired — dined York Tavern. Spencer Stanhope spoke to me.

"8th. Walked—called—air balloon—dined York Tavern."

Many were the greetings which poured in upon him, and not the least affectionate was that with which Mr. Pitt closed a series of daily letters.

"Downing Street, April 8th, 1781.

"My dear Wilberforce,

I can never enough congratulate you on such glorious success. I am going to dine at Wimbledon to-day, to mix my joy with Mrs. Dixon's, who has all the trophies of victory, such as handbills, ballads, &c. to adorn your kitchen, and your boy. I hope you will have a worthy successor in the person of Spencer Stanhope. I have seen Manners, who has no thought of standing, and will write to his friends in favour of Stanhope. I hope his accomplishments cannot fail to conciliate the previous confidence necessary for your sanction.

Ever yours,

W. Pitt.

"P. S. Westminster goes on well, in spite of the Duchess of Devonshire, and the other *women of the people,* but when the poll will close is uncertain."

Thus was accomplished this great triumph of independent principles. Its effect upon the great struggle then at issue was not less important. "Numbers of members have confessed to me," writes Mr. Duncombe,[17] "that they owed their success in their own counties to the example set by ours." By it, and nearly two hundred other victories over the adherents of the coalition party, Mr. Pitt became as strong in the House of Commons, as he had been hitherto in the affections of the people. "He was then able," says Mr. Wilberforce, "if he had duly estimated his position, to have cast off the corrupt machinery of influence, and formed his government upon the basis of independent principle." The issue of the Yorkshire contest might have suggested the possibility of such an effort. Its result was altogether new and unexpected. The return of a candidate who came forward upon ground which none had taken heretofore, was an intimation of that power, with which intelligence and property had now armed the middle ranks of society. As the man of the middle classes, he took his place in public life; as their representative, he was opposed alike to party influence and democratic licence; as their representative, he demanded and obtained the Abolition of the Slave Trade.

[17] To W. Wilberforce, Esq. 1789.

CHAPTER IV.

APRIL 1784 TO APRIL 1786.

Takes his seat for Yorkshire—Travels to Nice with Isaac Milner—His stay there—Return to London—Session of Parliament—Parliamentary reform—Return to the continent —Genoa—Geneva—Lavater—Spa—Gradual change in his principles.

AFTER a hasty tour in Devonshire, Mr. Wilberforce reached London upon the 14th of May, and took his seat in parliament, as member for the county of York. He possessed already enough to intoxicate his mind, whilst prospects of gratified ambition seemed to open without limit before him. He attended constantly through the first session of the new parliament, and swelled the triumphant majorities, which secured the supremacy of his friend. Upon the prorogation of parliament, he went down into the north, and presenting himself at York as "the joy" of the races, spent his twenty-fifth birth-day at the top wave and highest flow of those frivolous amusements, which had swallowed up so large a portion of his youth. Yet at this very time the providence of God was guiding him into that path which issued in his altered character.

Whilst at York, he proposed to his friend, W. Burgh, to become his companion in a continental tour. To his great surprise the offer was declined; and being thrown soon afterwards at Scarborough into the company of Isaac Milner, the invitation was transferred to him. His strong sense and well furnished mind recommended him as an agreeable companion; but little could either party then imagine the gracious purpose for which this choice was ordered.

After a hasty visit to Westmoreland, and "looking again on all the old scenes with vast pleasure,"[1] he started for the continent upon the 20th of October. One carriage was occupied by Isaac Milner and himself, whilst in another followed his mother, sister, and two female relatives. Crossing France to Lyons they embarked upon the Rhone; and whilst dropping down its stream to Avignon, "a voyage of four days under a cloudless sky," he writes from "just in sight of Valence,—

"TO LORD MUNCASTER, MUNCASTER CASTLE, CUMBERLAND.

"My dear Muncaster,

With much labour and difficulty, by trying every possible half hour when my eyes would bear writing, I have at last completely got through the answers to all my letters of business, which were accumulating into an immense heap on my table in Bruton Street, whilst I was muttering my wayward fancies on the

[1] Diary, Sept. 19.

banks of Windermere; and which, to my sore annoyance and discomfort, I have brought in my chaise into the heart of France. At last they are gone, and the devil go with them.[2] For the first time since I have been out, I now take up my pen without reluctance, to give you a little account of my proceedings since we parted at the foot of Hardknot.[3]

"I staid at Rayrigg a very few days, exploring every quarter, in order to select some spot for my future residence, blest with a more than common share of beauty; but though I saw several where I could be content to fix myself, if the eye alone were to be consulted in the choice, yet as long as one lives in this gross world one must have regard to matters of a more ignoble kind, and a less refined nature. Some situations were rejected because I should be too far from Kendal market, others because of their distance from the great boat; and at last, after a most accurate examination of the whole lake, I left the country without deciding any thing, but sorely sinning against that commandment which forbids our coveting our neighbour's house; for near Brathay Bridge there is a field which is in all respects supereminent, but which, as it is very near the house of the gentleman who lately bought the Brathay estate, I have no hopes of being able to purchase, except upon one ground, that, I mean, of the owner's being insensible to its value; a conclusion to which one is naturally led,

[2] The propriety of inserting this letter unaltered will be manifest from the sequel.

[3] A mountain in Eskdale.

when one recollects how *pure white* he has made the bridge; and though in all cases I now agree with Lady Muncaster, that grey is better, yet I don't know if to gain Mr. Law's consent to sell me his field, I should not be induced to promise him to make my house, stables, and every foot of building about me, as white as white can be. Well, after leaving Westmoreland I repaired to London, and spent about ten days in that neighbourhood, chiefly vibrating between Wimbledon and Brighthelmstone, and preparing for my journey into foreign parts, where I have been proceeding by slow marches ever since, with my mother, a couple of sick cousins, very good girls, whose health we hope to re-establish by the change of air, and a most intelligent and excellent friend of mine, a tutor of a college in Cambridge, whose wig I see excites no small astonishment in the Gallic perruquiers: he has equipped himself, however, with one of a smaller size, which he is to put on when we fix. At present we are sitting in our carriage in a boat, and driving down the Rhone to Avignon. The scenes are more romantic and wonderful than any one can conceive, except an inhabitant of Cumberland; and in truth, they are so like your north country, that my thoughts would naturally recur to Eskdale, from the similarity of the surrounding objects, if they had nought else to lead them thither; but this, my dear Muncaster, you will do me the justice to believe, is not the case; and I assure you I have often been looking out of your window, when you have not seen me, and

been endeavouring thus to live over again the pleasant days I passed with you in Cumberland. I frequently ramble in the wood, and I assure you I approve of your alteration in front, even more than I expected; for it does still better in theory than in practice. You, I suppose, are about this time encountering a more formidable antagonist, and if you are not a better sailor than myself, who was desperately sick between Dover and Calais though in the finest morning I ever beheld, you are sincerely to be pitied in your passage across the Irish Channel. When you get across, I hope your troubles will be over;[4] and it will give me pleasure to learn this from you on two grounds, both because I shall conclude your private concerns are brought to a desirable issue, and I shall hope that public matters are in a better train than when they were last the subject of our conversation. The cœlum non animam mutant is strictly true with respect to me; for though I am five hundred miles from the white cliffs of Albion, yet I do not feel my anxiety diminished either for 'the General'[5] or the other friends I have left behind me: I beg you will bear this in your mind, and satisfy me of the existence and well-being of one of them. You have no excuse, whose eyes are as stout as the rest of your carcass; and a book on one's knee is as

[4] Lord Muncaster had some claim upon the Irish property of Lord ——, which, owing to the uncertain administration of justice in that country, he had not been able to enforce. In the hope of obtaining his right through the possession of a seat in the Irish House of Lords, he had obtained his peerage; and about this time happily succeeded.

[5] Mr. Pitt.

good a writing-table as a plank put through the fore window of the post chaise. I shall direct to you at Muncaster, where if you are, I beg my best remembrances to Lady M. and my little friends, Gamel and Penny. Believe me, dear Muncaster,

Yours very sincerely,

Nov. 12, 1784. W. WILBERFORCE."

"Wednesday, Nov. 10th. Off," says his Diary, "by water on the Rhone.—Boat very inconvenient; but sat comfortably enough in our carriages, and decent inns at moderate distances from each other, close to the water; but beware of the coche d'eau, which fills the house with a sad crew, and often takes it entirely up. Our weather delightful the whole time, and the scenes uncommonly beautiful: the river running between two mountains be-vined, and immense rocks with towers on their pinnacles; and at a distance the Savoy mountains: finest at Viviers, and near Valence. Three miles from the first, Rosamore, an old castle on a pinnacle: climbed him, and had a tremendous view of a chasm. Stones seemed to have been fused. Without wind, one makes four or five miles an hour; with it strong against you, can't get on at all. Our boat held three carriages, and ten of us: for it we paid sixteen louis, and two to the men for themselves. The plains by the side planted with mulberry trees for the silk-worms. The wines, Cote Rotie, Hermitage, &c. all strong. The coche d'eau, a good boat with a room in it, may be hired for twenty-five louis.

If you do not take it to yourself it would be like a Margate hoy. — Beautifully situated convent of Viviers.

"Afternoon of Sunday, 14th. Got to Avignon... The salt for the Lyonnois, and many other provinces, goes up the Rhone in great boats drawn by horses from Arles, where it is made. . . The place sweetly situated, but a most dirty hole; particularly our inn, the St. Omers. A crew of fellows to receive us at landing, and drag our carriage to the inn, more like our countrymen in the brutality of their manners than the generality of supple Frenchmen, who always make you a bow where an Englishman would give you an oath. Laura's tomb not worth seeing: nothing but a flat stone under which they say she is laid. Left Avignon 16th Nov. and by a hard journey through bad roads, where have been robberies, (scene in Tony Lumpkin realized,) to Aix; and for want of horses, could not get off the next day. Walked about the town—a large, quiet, sleepy one. Good baths. The hot water at fountains in the public street.—18th, to Marseilles. The last half of the way execrable road. Whilst there, lived most with Governor S., Lord Chatham's 'Man of Steel.'. His extraordinary faculties of hearing, seeing, smelling, tasting, feeling—heard at five miles off, &c. The vainest man living—great in guttling, philosophy, politics—can smell the wind —withal, a very shrewd fellow of a very indifferent character, and suspected to be a spy. . . Marseilles the most entertaining place I ever saw, all bustle and

business; the port wonderful, and the dock the largest in Europe. Fine market—the course—the castle; and that built by Louis XIV. by a stroke of policy, commanding the harbour. Coral necklaces of £1000 value—easy process—got on the Algerine shore, and merely rubbed into beads. (The pictures of the plague in the Town Hall—Lazaretto—Isle d'Eu, where your young prodigals are confined on the application of their parents to the court: not so much in use as formerly; they live on a moderate allowance, but are always on the island.) Left Marseilles, 26th, for Toulon—astonishing rocks hewn through, and ready to close over you, at Olioulles—first oranges just after—about twenty ships of the line—would not let us see the dock—said 3000 people at work—27th, neglected Hyeres and its orange groves—28th, to Frejus—29th, Antibes—30th, Nice—the whole of Provence abounding in aromatics of all kinds: roads hitherto very bad—dusky olives—striking view from the Estrelles—formerly infested by banditti—trees cut down near the road to prevent their sudden attack—the country more delightful than can be imagined—every thing to constitute beauties of prospect, but rivers and verdure—the olives too almost the only wood except where you have pines."

Here they were soon settled "in a house separated from the Mediterranean only by a grove of orange trees," and found themselves surrounded by many of the higher ranks of their own countrymen. "Duke of Gloucester, Lady Rivers, and G. Pitt, Sir I.

Wroughton, Bosanquet, Duchess of Ancaster and Lady Charlotte, &c. here—the commandant Comte de St. André, and the Comte de Revel, and Chevalier de Revel, extremely obliging to the English."[5] "The natives were in general a wretched set—several of them, however, poor noblesse. There were nightly card parties at the different houses, and a great deal of gambling. The most respectable person amongst them was the Chevalier de Revel: he spoke English well, and was a great favourite of Frederic North's, who was then at Nice in a very nervous state, and giving entire credit to the animal magnetizers. The chief operator, M. Toalag, tried his skill on Milner and myself, but neither of us felt any thing, owing perhaps to our incredulity. North, on the contrary, would fall down upon entering a room in which they practised on him; and he even maintained to me, that they could affect the frame though in another room, or at a distance, and you were ignorant of their proceedings."[6] "Staid here till Feb. 3rd[7]—dined frequently in the open air during the last three weeks—rode before breakfast till Christmas day—the climate extremely changeable—the fineness of it seems to be owing to the sun and the mountains, which, making a complete basin, reflect his rays in all possible intersections and reverberations, until the air is so warmed as to dry up every particle of moisture—never once a fog—before I left it, beans in flower, and almond trees in general—(argument respecting sun making up to

[5] Diary. [6] MS. Mem. [7] Diary.

tender plants for frost drawn from the orange trees, peas, carnations)—all the country flat round Nice—a garden with olives in it—terraces raised by the hills very valuable—the hills filled with myrtle, lentiscus, rosemary, thyme, lavender, and all our garden aromatics. It must be a bad place for consumptive persons, but good for convalescents, who will be very cautious, as they may take air every day—country soon dry after rain; and the rides and walks so various, if you will quit the muddy Var road, that if you stay six months you may have variety. It is safest to ride a mule, both on account of their sure-footedness, and because the mules will attack horses, particularly the savage Turin-road mules, which are large and powerful animals, some seventeen hands high, surprisingly sure-footed, and patient of hunger and hardship—the universal carriers. Roads good for horses; but not for carriages—except two miles on the Turin and four on the Var road. Smuggling carried on from Nice, Genoa, and Leghorn, of French wines. Lived in the Pavilion House—rode out with Milner, and saw the country—dined early, and to bed. Out at assemblies and balls frequently. Gave dinners often."

In all these scenes he was constantly accompanied by Milner, whose vivacity and sense, joined with rustic and unpolished manners, continually amused his friends. —"Pretty boy, pretty boy," uttered in the broadest Yorkshire dialect, whilst he stroked familiarly his head, was the mode in which he first addressed the young Prince William of Gloucester. "Though

Milner's religious principles were even now, in theory, much the same as in later life, yet they had at this time little practical effect upon his conduct. He was free from every taint of vice but not more attentive than others to religion;"[8] (though a clergyman, he never thought of reading prayers during their whole stay at Nice;) "he appeared in all respects like an ordinary man of the world, mixing like myself in all companies, and joining as readily as others in the prevalent Sunday parties. Indeed, when I engaged him as a companion in my tour, I knew not that he had any deeper principles. The first time I discovered it, was at the public table at Scarborough. The conversation turned on Mr. Stillingfleet;[9] and I spoke of him as a good man, but one who carried things too far. —'Not a bit too far,' said Milner; and to this opinion he adhered, when we renewed the conversation in the evening on the sands. This declaration greatly surprised me; and it was agreed that at some future time we would talk the matter over. Had I known at first what his opinions were, it would have decided me against making him the offer; so true is it that a gracious hand leads us in ways that we know not, and blesses us not only without, but even against, our plans and inclinations."[10] The imperfect recollection which he now retained of what he had seen and felt, when beneath his uncle's roof at Wimbledon, made him the more ready to condemn, as extravagance and

[8] MS. Mem.
[9] Rev. I. Stillingfleet, rector of Hotham.
[10] MS. Mem.

methodism, all serious attention to religion; and this tendency had doubtless been increased by his attendance at Mr. Lindsey's meeting, which he frequented, "not from any preference for his peculiar doctrines, for in this, except on some great festivals, his preaching differed little from that which was then common amongst the London clergy, but because he seemed more earnest and practical than others."[11] Milner, on the contrary, though deficient in practical religion, knew enough to regard it with reverence in others, and whenever his lively companion treated it with raillery, would seriously combat his objections, adding, "I am no match for you, Wilberforce, in this running fire, but if you really wish to discuss these subjects seriously, I will gladly enter on them with you." No great impression could be expected on another from reasonings which so little influenced himself; and their discussions appear to have been merely speculative up to the period of their quitting Nice in the winter of 1784-5. Just before this journey, Mr. Wilberforce took up casually a little volume, (Doddridge's Rise and Progress of Religion,) which Mr. Unwin, Cowper's correspondent, had given to the mother of one amongst his fellow-travellers, and casting his eye over it hastily, asked Milner what was its character.—"It is one of the best books ever written," was his answer; "let us take it with us and read it on our journey." He easily consented, and they read it carefully together, with thus much effect, that

[11] Con. Mem.

he determined at some future season to examine the Scriptures for himself, and see if things were stated there in the same manner. In this journey he was alone with Milner.

Leaving his family at Nice, he returned to support the cause of parliamentary reform. "As there can be no doubt," wrote Mr. Robert Smith, "of the administration being very strong at the opening of the session, on Jan. 25th, I do not see the least necessity for your being at home at that time, but I think you ought not, if possible, to be absent on the great question of Parliamentary Reform, which Pitt now publicly declares he will bring on early in the session. It is a specific proposition to increase the county members, with a plan for diminishing the number of the rotten boroughs. Pitt declares that he will exert his influence to the uttermost in this measure. Wyvill is in town and all the reformers are stirring." Late in January he heard from Mr. Pitt that a day was fixed for the discussion of the motion, and he set out at once to give it his support. The journey across France at that season of the year was not then accomplished without some risks. Leaving summer behind them at Nice, they travelled from Antibes, through eighteen days of snow. Once upon the hills of Burgundy, as they climbed a frozen road, the weight of their carriage overpowered the horses, and it was just running over a frightful precipice, when Milner, who was walking behind, perceived the danger, and by a sudden effort of his great strength of muscle arrested its descent.

They reached Dartford about midnight, (Feb. 21st,) and heard that they might still be soon enough for the expected division of that morning upon the Westminster election, but he would not go on. The next day, (Feb. 22nd,) he reached London, "and found that government had barely carried it. Took up my quarters at Pitt's.—24th. Ballotted into Penryn committee—Pitt's maid burnt my letters"[12]—a dangerous mistake to the young representative of Yorkshire.—"March 3rd. Sawbridge's motion to discontinue the scrutiny carried by thirty-nine, and opposition in high spirits—sat late—did not vote.—10th. Dined Camelford's—'Pitt does not make friends.'—11th. Our committee wanted to explain away its Resolutions—sad quarrelling all the time between Windham and Bamber Gascoyne the two nominees."—Mr. Pitt's motion for Reform was fixed for the 23rd of March, when, says Mr. Wilberforce's Diary, "Pitt's Reform put off for want of a ballot." They were now closely engaged in perfecting its details.—"At Pitt's all day—it goes on well—sat up late chatting with Pitt—his good hopes of the country, and noble, patriotic heart.—To town—Pitt's—House—Parliamentary Reform—terribly disappointed and beat—extremely fatigued—spoke extremely ill, but commended.[13]—Called at Pitt's—met poor Wyvill."[14]

He was attacked in this debate by Mr. Fox, for adopting a tone which would not gain the House of Commons to his views. But he would not suppress

[12] Diary. [13] Ib. April 18. [14] Ib. 19.

these sentiments out of deference to any class of men. "The consequence of this measure," he said, "will be that the freedom of opinion will be restored, and party connexions in great measure vanish; for party on one side begets party on the other, and for myself I wish to give my vote not with a view to men, but measures." Ever since the days of Walpole party connexions had led to purchased support. With this system he believed that Mr. Pitt, even as it was, might have dispensed; and the present measure would have insured its destruction. Civil and still more ecclesiastical appointments would no longer have been regarded as materials of parliamentary influence, while faction in the country would have been prevented by making property the condition of power.

During the remainder of the session he attended constantly in his place, and took part occasionally in the debates. "May 12th. House all night, till eight o'clock in the morning—Lord Surrey—differ from constituents—so affected that I could not get on—Pitt spoke wonderfully." "House—spoke—but cannot preserve the train as some could do, and too hot and violent."[15] He still lived in a constant round of company and amusement, dining twice or three times a week with Mr. Pitt—joining in the festivities in which Dundas delighted at Wimbledon and Richmond; whilst "sitting up all night singing—shirked Duchess of Gordon, at Almack's—danced till five in the morning;" are fair samples of the common descriptions of his days. Yet

[15] Diary, May 19.

already, amongst these lighter memorials, there appears from time to time a new tone of deeper feeling.—"Dined Hamilton's—christening—very indecent—all laughing round.[16] Opera—shocking dance of Festin de Pierre, and unmoved audience.[17] S. and I talked—strange that the most generous men and religious, do not see that their duties increase with their fortune, and that they will be punished for spending it in eating, &c.[18] Sir G. Beaumont and Lady Phipps, &c. to dine with me at Wimbledon—Phipps's chat from Locke to New Testament." But these thoughts were as yet entirely speculative; exercising no apparent influence upon his conduct. The session which had been expected to terminate in May, was not concluded at the end of June, and before he could leave town on his return to Provence the increasing heat of summer had emptied Nice. "The beau monde," wrote Mrs. Wilberforce,[19] "are removing to summer quarters. Lady Lindsay took her leave at a ball, in her own house, last night. The Buckleys, Binnings, Lord Barnard, Grosvenor, Barwell, and Bosanquet are gone. The Duchess of Ancaster and Lady Charlotte depart to-morrow for Montpelier. In consequence of these revolutions our evening meetings are thin. I grieve at the necessity of your stay on all accounts."—"The Duke of Gloucester and his family purpose halting this day at Montpelier, and fixing at Geneva for the summer. Observe, we do not wish their neighbourhood—much ceremony and little pleasure might be the

[16] Diary, April 4. [17] Ib. April 14. [18] Ib. April 19. [19] April 1.

consequence. The Duchess took a gracious leave, desired her compliments to you, and hoped that we might meet in Switzerland. None of us have any fear of travelling under La Plume's care; we can proceed to any place you shall appoint."[20] "I hope to cheer you," adds his sister, "by the assurance that B. rides out with unfailing perseverance. M. has voice enough to abuse the wood-cutter audibly, and if my life and conversation were put into the Diary, good hours would make some figure. B. certainly gains strength; for a few days she was prevented from riding by the lameness of her pony, but now she and the gay La Plume again sally forth. The Duchess of Ancaster is gone. O. was one of her great attendants —in my opinion a very disagreeable man. When in spirits he laughs and is pert,—and reminds me of a dog in a sunshiny day after rainy weather, who upon being let out of doors shakes his head, wags his tail, and looks brisk. If your arrival is delayed, fix upon any place for us to go to, and with one who has travelled as much as La Plume, joined to our own experience, we may do very comfortably." Genoa was fixed on for their rendezvous; and thither they were adventurous enough to sail in a felucca under the sole escort of their courier. Here they were joined by Mr. Wilberforce and I. Milner, upon the 7th of July, and on the 11th set out together on their road to Switzerland. They travelled as in their former journey, and the conversation between Mr. Wilberforce and Milner

[20] May 6.

became more important than before. They began, as Milner had proposed, to read the Greek Testament, and to examine carefully the doctrines which it taught. From Genoa they went by Turin to Geneva, and fell in there with several of their English friends. [21] "Met with Wyvill at Miss Danby's, and returned with him; he deep in the constitution of Geneva. Often with Ryder, who shows his understanding by his curiosity: he will make a figure."—[22] "De Lageard dined and Wyvill — dispute about government — Lavater, an original looking man with appearance of strong animation, which increased by being distressed for language—De Lageard at him immediately and disputing—Tissot a Pittite, and most here the same." [23] "De Lageard with us again—a great deal of eloquence—seems not so sanguine in his prospects—Queen likes not clergy. Evening fine and sun on rocks—Lord Spencer called—Stories about Lavater's miracles, and Baron Swedenborg." From Geneva the party passed on to Berne, whence he wrote playfully to his friend in Cumberland.

TO LORD MUNCASTER.

"Berne, 14th Aug. 1785.

"Dear Muncaster,

That a man who has been for the last week environed by eternal snows, and hemmed in by the Shreckhorn, and the Wetterhorn, and the Jungfrau, should stoop to take notice of a grovelling being, who

[21] Diary, July 22. [22] Ib. Aug. 3.
[23] Ib. Aug. 7.

crawls along the level surface of the county of Cumberland, is an instance of genuine steadiness and equal serenity of temper, which will not pass unobserved and unadmired before so accurate an observer as yourself. Yet I dare say you think yourself most magnificent, with your Hardknot and Wrynose, and discover in your Lilliput, risings and fallings invisible to the grosser organs of the inhabitant of Brobdignag. —If you read on thus far, I am sure your patience will hold out no longer, and my letter goes into the fire, which in your cold part of the world you will certainly be sitting over when my packet arrives, about the end of the month. You then go to Lady Muncaster, and with a glance on your sevenfold shield, on which the setting sun is gleaming with a brilliancy which would throw a stoic into raptures, you lament over me as a poor, infatuated, perverted renegade, 'false to my gods, my country, and my father.' The greatest punishment your old regard will suffer you to inflict on me, will be a perpetual condemnation to breathe the air of the House of Commons, and to have no other ideas of a country prospect, or a country life, than can be collected from a stare from Richmond hill, or a dinner at the Star and Garter. No, Muncaster, I am no renegade. True to my first love, a long and intimate acquaintance has made me find out so many excellences and perfections that my affections are not to be changed, though in the course of my travels I see a fairer face, or a more exquisite symmetry,

'Tis the dear, the blest effect of Celia altogether.'

If therefore you should hear of my taking a country house in one of the Swiss cantons, don't take it for granted that I have forgot the land of promise. Allow now and then a transient infidelity; my constancy shall be unshaken to my true Dulcinea. 'These are my visits, but she is my home.'

But to drop all metaphor, I have never been in any other part of the world, for which I could quit a residence in England with so little regret: God grant that the public and private state of our own country may never reduce it to such a situation as to give this the preference in my esteem. At present I have the same unalterable affection for Old England, founded as I think in reason, or as foreigners would tell me, in prejudice; but I feel sometimes infected with a little of your own anxiety; I fancy I see storms arising, which already 'no bigger than a man's hand,' will by and by overspread and blacken the whole face of heaven. It is not the confusion of parties, and their quarrelling and battling in the House of Commons, which makes me despair of the republic, (if I knew a word half way between 'apprehend for' and 'despair,' that would best express my meaning,) but it is the universal corruption and profligacy of the times, which taking its rise amongst the rich and luxurious has now extended its baneful influence and spread its destructive poison through the whole body of the people. When the mass of blood is corrupt, there is no remedy but amputation.

I beg my best remembrances to Lady Muncaster, and

my little friends, Penny and Gam. Tell the latter if he will meet me at Spa, I will turn him into a pancake as often as he will.

Believe me to be
ever yours most affectionately,
W. WILBERFORCE."

Upon the 12th he went on to[24] "the paradise of Interlachen," upon "a heavenly day, with not one cloud above the horizon." Upon the 13th they were "in a terrible squall of wind and rain upon the lake of Thun—run ashore; at last safe in at Thun, and got to the fire, wet and knocked up. 14th. Ladies had caught no cold—fright their great coat." Upon the 20th they reached Zurich, and on the 21st "Saw Lavater — He says that the English are remarkable for smooth foreheads, and strong-marked eye-brows. We called upon him in the evening—he could give us he said only half an hour, but we got him on the *subject;* his supposed revelations..physiognomy he dismissed as not serious enough to be mentioned in comparison . . and he said, on our offering to go, such a conversation as that not to be broken off—it would be to go against Providence—strange stories—forty guineas—revelation—his papers prevented being discovered."[25] "I had been chosen treasurer," said Lavater, "of a certain charitable institution, and had received the funds subscribed for its conduct, when a friend came in great distress, and begged me to advance

[24] Diary. [25] Ib.

him a sum of money to save him from bankruptcy. 'You should have it at once, but I have no such sum.' 'You have the charity fund in your power; lend me what I need from that: long before the day comes on which you must pay it over, I shall be able to replace it, and you will save me and mine from ruin.' At last I reluctantly consented. His hopes, as I had foreseen, were disappointed; he could not repay me; and on the morrow I must give in my accounts. In an agony of feelings, I prayed earnestly that some way of escaping from my difficulties might yet present itself, that I might be saved from disgracing religion by such an apparent dishonesty. I rose from my knees, and in the nervous restlessness of a harassed mind, began to pull open every drawer I had, and ransack its contents. Why I did it I know not, but whilst I was thus engaged, my eye caught a small paper parcel, to the appearance of which I was a stranger. I opened it, I took it up, and found that it contained money: I tore it open, and found in it the sum I needed to settle my accounts. But how it came there, or where it came from, I could never learn."[26] "Child spoke for whom he had prayed on christening. [27]An excellent man in his whole conduct—kissed us with extreme affection, and said, if he received any thing we should too. He and many others ardently look for the coming of some 'Elu,' who is to impart to them a large measure of grace. He will know the 'Elu' the moment he sets eyes on him.[28]

[26] Conversat. Mem. [27] Diary, Aug. 22.

[28] "Milner subsequently endeavoured to reclaim Lavater from his mystical notions, by a Latin letter, in the composition of which he took

"24th. Schaffhausen—falls of Rhine—birth-day. Then off and got to Waldshut—ball at night—curious couples, and dance—26th. Brisac—town of war—soldiers did not march so well as ours—grand review of horse; very strong, but not quick or active in their evolutions as our own. Review of artillery—bombs—cannons—they hit very ill." Travelling on by easy stages he reached Spa upon the 8th of September.

His discussions with Isaac Milner were continued throughout this journey, until "by degrees[29] I imbibed his sentiments, though I must confess with shame, that they long remained merely as opinions assented to by my understanding, but not influencing my heart. My interest in them certainly increased, and at length I began to be impressed with a sense of their importance. Milner, though full of levity on all other subjects, never spoke on this but with the utmost seriousness, and all he said, tended to increase my attention to religion." So interesting were these conversations now become to him, that his fellow-travellers complained of the infrequency of his visits to their carriage. In this state of feeling he arrived at Spa, and spent almost six weeks in that "curious assemblage from all parts of Europe." Amongst the rest were many of his English friends; and though on some few points he now con-

vast pains. 'I am a poor man,' Lavater briefly replied, 'and the postage of long letters is inconvenient to me.'" Con. Mem. In other quarters, however, Lavater's correspondence was considerable. Vid. Goethe, Dictung und Wahrheit.

[29] MS. Mem.

troverted their opinions, yet in general he joined freely in their ordinary pleasures. "Mrs. Crewe," he says, "cannot believe that I can think it wrong to go to the play. — Surprised at hearing that halting on the Sunday was my wish, and not my mother's." Yet though his outward appearance gave little evidence of their existence, deeper feelings were at work beneath. "[30] Often while in the full enjoyment of all that this world could bestow, my conscience told me that in the true sense of the word, I was not a Christian. I laughed, I sang, I was apparently gay and happy, but the thought would steal across me, 'What madness is all this; to continue easy in a state in which a sudden call out of the world would consign me to everlasting misery, and that, when eternal happiness is within my grasp!' For I had received into my understanding the great truths of the gospel, and believed that its offers were free and universal; and that God had promised to give his Holy Spirit to them that asked for it. At length such thoughts as these completely occupied my mind, and I began to pray earnestly." "Began three or four days ago," he says, [31] Oct. 25th, "to get up very early. In the solitude and self-conversation of the morning had thoughts, which I trust will come to something."—"As soon as I reflected seriously upon these subjects, the deep guilt and black ingratitude of my past life forced itself upon me in the strongest colours, and I condemned myself for having wasted my precious time, and opportunities, and talents."

[30] Mem. of Conversation; and MS. Mem. [31] Diary.

Thus he returned home; another man in his inner being, yet manifesting outwardly so little of the hidden struggle, "that it was not," says one of his companions, "until many months after our return, that I learned what had been passing in his mind."

Upon the 10th of November he reached Wimbledon, and as parliament did not meet until the following February, he was much alone and had leisure to commune with himself. The more he reflected, the deeper became his new impressions. "It was not so much," he has said, "the fear of punishment by which I was affected, as a sense of my great sinfulness in having so long neglected the unspeakable mercies of my God and Saviour; and such was the effect which this thought produced, that for months I was in a state of the deepest depression, from strong convictions of my guilt. Indeed nothing which I have ever read in the accounts of others, exceeded what I then felt."[32] These were now his habitual feelings; carefully concealed from others, and in some measure no doubt dispelled by company, but reviving in their full force as soon as he retired into himself.

Whilst this struggle was at its height, he commenced a private Journal, with the view of making himself "humble, and watchful."[33] The entries of this private record mark the difficulties and variations of his mind, while they show strikingly the spirit of practical improvement by which he was directed.

"Nov. 24th. Heard the Bible read two hours—

[32] Con. Mem. [33] Journal, Nov. 21.

Pascal one hour and a quarter—meditation one hour and a quarter—business the same. If ever I take myself from the immediate consideration of serious things, I entirely lose sight of them; this must be a lesson to me to keep them constantly in view. Pitt called, and commended Butler's Analogy—resolved to write to him, and discover to him what I am occupied about: this will save me much embarrassment, and I hope give me more command both of my time and conduct."

"25th. Up at six—private devotions half an hour—Pascal three quarters—to town on business. I feel quite giddy and distracted by the tumult, except when in situations of which I am rather ashamed, as in the stage coach: the shame, pride; but a useful lesson.—St. Antholyn's—Mr. Forster's—felt much devotion, and wondered at a man who fell asleep during the Psalms: during the sermon I fell asleep myself.—Walked, and stage coach, to save the expense of a chaise.

"26th. Went out early—wrote to S. and got his answer, very affectionate and kind, God bless him—refused to go to Camden Place, and to Pitt's; but all religious thoughts go off in London—I hope by explaining my situation and feelings, to relieve myself from my embarrassment.

"Sunday, 27th. Up at six—devotions half an hour—Pascal three quarters—Butler three quarters—church—read the Bible, too ramblingly, for an hour—heard Butler, but not attentively, two hours—

meditated twenty minutes—hope I was more attentive at church than usual, but serious thoughts vanished the moment I went out of it, and very insensible and cold in the evening service—some very strong feelings when I went to bed; God turn them to account, and in any way bring me to himself. I have been thinking I have been doing well by living alone, and reading generally on religious subjects; I must awake to my dangerous state, and never be at rest till I have made my peace with God. My heart is so hard, my blindness so great, that I cannot get a due hatred of sin, though I see I am all corrupt, and blinded to the perception of spiritual things.

"28th. I hope as long as I live to be the better for the meditation of this evening; it was on the sinfulness of my own heart, and its blindness and weakness. True, Lord, I am wretched, and miserable, and blind, and naked. What infinite love, that Christ should die to save such a sinner, and how necessary is it He should save us altogether, that we may appear before God with nothing of our own! God grant I may not deceive myself, in thinking I feel the beginnings of gospel comfort. Began this night constant family prayer, and resolved to have it every morning and evening, and to read a chapter when time.

"Tuesday, 29th. I bless God I enjoyed comfort in prayer this evening. I must keep my own unworthiness ever in view. Pride is my greatest stumblingblock; and there is danger in it in two ways—lest it should make me desist from a christian life, through

fear of the world, my friends, &c.; or if I persevere, lest it should make me vain of so doing. In all disputes on religion, I must be particularly on my guard to distinguish it from a zeal for God and his cause. I must consider and set down the marks whereby they may be known from each other. I will form a plan of my particular duty, praying God to enable me to do it properly, and set it before me as a chart of the country, and map of the road I must travel. Every morning some subject of thought for the hours of walking, lounging, &c. if alone.

"Nov. 30th. Was very fervent in prayer this morning, and thought these warm impressions would never go off. Yet in vain endeavoured in the evening to rouse myself. God grant it may not all prove vain; oh if it does, how will my punishment be deservedly increased! The only way I find of moving myself, is by thinking of my great transgressions, weakness, blindness, and of God's having promised to supply these defects. But though I firmly believe them, yet I read of future judgment, and think of God's wrath against sinners, with no great emotions. What can so strongly show the stony heart? O God, give me a heart of flesh! Nothing so convinces me of the dreadful state of my own mind, as the possibility, which, if I did not know it from experience, I should believe impossible, of my being ashamed of Christ. Ashamed of the Creator of all things! One who has received infinite pardon and mercy, ashamed of the Dispenser of it, and that in a country where his

name is professed! Oh, what should I have done in persecuting times? (Forgot to set down that when my servants came in the first time to family prayer, I felt ashamed.)"

"I thought seriously this evening of going to converse with Mr. Newton—waked in the night—obliged to compel myself to think of God."

"Dec. 2nd. Resolved again about Mr. Newton. It may do good; he will pray for me; his experience may enable him to direct me to new grounds of humiliation, and it is that only which I can perceive God's Spirit employ to any effect. It can do no harm, for that is a scandalous objection which keeps occurring to me, that if ever my sentiments change, I shall be ashamed of having done it: it can only humble me, and, whatever is the right way, if truth be right I ought to be humbled—but, sentiments change! Kept debating in that unsettled way to which I have used myself, whether to go to London or not, and then how—wishing to save expense, I hope with a good motive, went at last in the stage to town—inquired for old Newton; but found he lived too far off for me to see him—lingered till time to go to Mr. Forster's—much struck with the text, 2 Chron. xv. 2—afterwards walked home."

He now began to open to his friends the change which had passed upon him. His own way he hoped would be clearer when his principles were understood; and the frank avowal of his altered views was due to those with whom he had lived hitherto in levity and

thoughtlessness. Some treated this announcement as the effect of a temporary depression, which social intercourse would soon relieve; one threw angrily his letter in the fire; others knowing that his past life had not been vicious, imagined that he could but turn ascetic, and regretted their expected loss of his social accomplishments and political assistance. He wrote to Mr. Pitt amongst the rest; opening fully the grounds on which he acted, and the bearing of his new principles upon his public conduct—"I told him that though I should ever feel a strong affection for him, and had every reason to believe that I should be in general able to support him, yet that I could no more be so much a party man as I had been before."[34] On the 2nd of December "I got," he says, "Pitt's answer—much affected by it—to see him in the morning."[35] "It was full of kindness—nothing I had told him, he said, could affect our friendship; that he wished me always to act as I thought right. I had said that I thought when we met we had better not discuss the topics of my letter. 'Why not discuss them?' was his answer; 'let me come to Wimbledon to-morrow, to talk them over with you.' He thought that I was out of spirits, and that company and conversation would be the best way of dissipating my impressions."[36] Mr. Pitt came the next morning as he had proposed, and found Mr. Wilberforce not unprepared for the discussion. "I had prayed," he says,[37] "to God, I hope

[34] Conversat. Mem.
[35] Diary.
[36] Ib.
[37] Journal

with some sincerity, not to lead me into disputing for my own exaltation, but for his glory. Conversed with Pitt near two hours, and opened myself completely to him. I admitted that as far as I could conform to the world, with a perfect regard to my duty to God, myself, and my fellow-creatures, I was bound to do it; that no inward feelings ought to be taken as demonstrations of the Spirit being in any man, (was not this too general? 'witnesseth with one Spirit,' &c.) but only the change of disposition and conduct." "He tried to reason me out of my convictions, but soon found himself unable to combat their correctness, if Christianity were true. The fact is, he was so absorbed in politics, that he had never given himself time for due reflection on religion. But amongst other things he declared to me, that Bishop Butler's work raised in his mind more doubts than it had answered."[38]

Though he now felt more than ever the need of some like-minded associates in the narrow path which lay before him, he could scarcely bring himself to form these new connexions. "Had a good deal of debate with myself," he says, Dec. 3rd, "about seeing Newton; but the rather right if I talk upon the subject with those who differ from me, as I am so new to it myself." This self-debate issued in his writing to Mr. Newton.

[38] Conversat. Mem.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

"Dec. 2, 1785.

"Sir,

There is no need of apology for intruding on you, when the errand is religion. I wish to have some serious conversation with you, and will take the liberty of calling on you for that purpose, in half an hour; when, if you cannot receive me, you will have the goodness to let me have a letter put into my hands at the door, naming a time and place for our meeting, the earlier the more agreeable to me. I have had ten thousand doubts within myself, whether or not I should discover myself to you; but every argument against doing it has its foundation in pride. I am sure you will hold yourself bound to let no one living know of this application, or of my visit, till I release you from the obligation." (What follows, as well as the signature, is torn off.)

"P. S. Remember that I must be secret, and that the gallery of the House is now so universally attended, that the face of a member of parliament is pretty well known."

This letter he took with him, upon Sunday, Dec. 4th, into the city, and "delivered it" himself "to old Newton at his church." The following Wednesday was named for an interview; and then, says he,[39] "after walking about the Square once or twice before

[39] Journal, Dec. 6.

I could persuade myself, I called upon old Newton—was much affected in conversing with him—something very pleasing and unaffected in him. He told me he always had entertained hopes and confidence that God would some time bring me to Him—that he had heard from J. Thornton we had declined Sunday visits abroad—on the whole he encouraged me—though got nothing new from him, as how could I, except a good hint, that he never found it answer to dispute, and that it was as well not to make visits that one disliked over agreeable. When I came away I found my mind in a calm, tranquil state, more humbled, and looking more devoutly up to God." It was part of Mr. Newton's counsel, that he should not hastily form new connexions, nor widely separate from his former friends. This very day, accordingly, he says, " as I promised, I went to Pitt's—sad work—I went there in fear, and for some time kept an awe on my mind—my feelings lessened in the evening, and I could scarce lift up myself in prayer to God at night."

" 7th. At Holwood—up early and prayed, but not with much warmth—then to the St. John's at Beckenham. In chaise opened myself to ——, who had felt much four years ago when very ill. He says that H. took off his then religious feelings—but query, what did he give him in the room of them? Rather tried to show off at the St. John's, and completely forgot God—came away in a sad state to town, and was reduced almost to wish myself like others

when I saw the carriages and people going to court, &c. With what different sensations of confidence and comfort did I come away from Newton and Beckenham! the one was confidence in myself; the other in God. Got out of town; but instead of mending when alone, as I dismissed all caution, I grew worse, and my mind in a sad state this evening,—could scarcely pray, but will hope and wait on God.—Thursday, 8th. Very cold all day, and dead to religious things, could not warm myself in prayer or meditation; even doubted if I was in the right way: and all generals: no particular objection. O God, deliver me from myself! when I trust to myself I am darkness and weakness."

He had not yet attained that self-command, which afterwards enabled him to mingle in these gay scenes with an untainted spirit. Yet even now he saw through the gaudy show. "At the levee," he says some weeks before this time, "and then dined at Pitt's—sort of cabinet dinner—was often thinking that pompous Thurlow, and elegant Carmarthen, would soon appear in the same row with the poor fellow who waited behind their chairs." Solitude and self-reflection restored him to himself. "Dec. 9th. God I hope has had mercy on me, and given me again some spark of grace.—Dined at Mrs. Wilberforce's (his aunt)—Mr. Thornton there. How unaffectedly happy he is—oh that I were like him. I grow hardened and more callous than ever—a little moved in prayer, but when I leave my study I

cannot keep religious thoughts and impressions on my mind.

"Dec. 11th. Sunday.—Heard Newton on the '*addiction*' of the soul to God. 'They that observe lying vanities shall forsake their own mercy.'—Excellent. He shows his whole heart is engaged. I felt sometimes moved at church, but am still callous.

"12th. More fervent, I hope, in prayer—resolved more in God's strength; therefore, I hope, likely to keep my resolutions—rather shocked at Lady L's: these people have no thought of their souls.

"13th. I hope I feel more than I did of divine assistance. May I be enabled to submit to it in distrust of myself. I do not know what to make of myself; but I resolve, under God, to go on. Much struck in Mr. Newton's Narrative, where he says he once persevered two years, and went back again. Oh may I be preserved from relapse! and yet if I cannot stand now, how shall I be able to do it when the struggle comes on in earnest?—I am too intent upon shining in company, and must curb myself here."

"Behold me," he writes[40] to his sister, "by my own fire-side, in all the state of an arm-chair, and the peaceable possession of my own time, which I am endeavouring to improve to some more rational purposes than those to which I have in general made it subservient. My studies chiefly point one way, but then it is that way in which it is of infinite importance that our views should be clear and

[40] Dec. 14.

settled. I hope my dear sister will in some degree be the better for them; at least, if nothing else, she will have a proof of my affection, when, as I design, I send her from time to time a sheet full of my lucubrations. Letter-writing like conversation should be a transcript of the thoughts for the hour in which one has the pen in hand; and as my thoughts run generally in one current, it would be a violence to attempt to turn the stream into another channel: not that I mean to give up the propriety of 'from grave to gay,' but the one should be the business, the other the relaxation of life; and there is no such firm ground on which to fix the foundation of a perpetual gaiety, (though gaiety but ill expresses my idea,) as to have been grave to good purpose. I will give it a more worthy epithet than gay. Let me call it serenity, tranquillity, composure which is not to be destroyed; though, in the limited degree in which we yet possess it, it may alas be ruffled by all the tumult and noise, and even all the accidents and misfortunes, of the world. May you my dear sister be possessed of that temper which we can only get one way, but in that may be sure of it."

To this serenity of mind he had not yet attained. "I go off sadly," he says now of himself on different days,[41]—"I am colder and more insensible than I was —I ramble—O God, protect me from myself—I never yet think of religion but by constraint—I am in a most doubtful state. To Newton's, but when he

[41] Journal.

prayed I was cold and dead; and the moment we were out of his house, seriousness decayed." "Very wretched—all sense gone." "Colder than ever—very unhappy—called at Newton's, and bitterly moved: he comforted me." Yet some gleams of the coming sunshine even now gladdened him at favoured intervals.

"Tuesday, Dec. 20th. More enlarged and sincere in prayer—went to hear Romaine—dined at the Adelphi: both before and afterwards much affected by seriousness. Went to hear Forster, who very good: enabled to join in the prayers with my whole heart, and never so happy in my life, as this whole evening—enlarged in private prayer, and have a good hope towards God." "Got up Wednesday morning in the same frame of mind, and filled with peace, and hope, and humility; yet some doubts if all this real, or will be lasting—Newton's church—he has my leave to mention my case to my aunt and Mr. Thornton—not quite so warm, but still a good hope—I trust God is with me: but he must ever keep beside me; for I fall the moment I am left to myself. I staid in town to attend the ordinances, and have been gloriously blest in them.

"23rd. I do not find the use of keeping a diary in this way; I will therefore try how I go on without it. I think it rather makes me satisfied with myself, by leading me to compare the number of hours I spend seriously with those others do; when all depends on doing it to good purpose. Was strengthened in prayer, and trust I shall be able to live more to

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God, which determined to do — much affected by Doddridge's directions for spending time, and hope to conform to them in some degree: it must be by force at first, for I find I perpetually wander from serious thoughts when I am off my guard.

"24th. Up very early, and passed some hours tolerably, according to my resolutions; but indolence comes upon me. Resolved to practise Doddridge's rules, and prayed to God to enable me. I wish to take the sacrament to-morrow, that it may fix this variable, and affect this senseless heart, which of itself is dead alike to all emotions of terror and gratitude in spiritual things."

He did not venture to communicate according to his wish: he had learned probably at this time, from Doddridge, to view the eucharist rather as an act of self-dedication than as a means of grace; or the spirit which induced him to record,[42] "there is nothing so blessed to me as the gospel ordinances," would have led him at this season to the table of the Lord. His diligence in using all the means of grace was a striking feature of his new character. "What my heart most impels me now to say to you," he writes to his sister, "is 'Search the Scriptures,' and with all that earnestness and constancy which that book claims, in which 'are the words of eternal life.' Never read it without praying to God that he will open your eyes to understand it; for the power of comprehending it comes from him, and him only. 'Seek and ye shall find,'

[42] Dec. 23.

says our Saviour; 'Take heed how ye hear;' which implies, that unless we seek, and diligently too, we shall not find; and, unless we take heed we shall be deceived in hearing. There is no opinion so fatal as that which is commonly received in *these liberal* days, that a person is in a safe state with respect to a future world, if he acts tolerably up to his knowledge and convictions, though he may not have taken much pains about acquiring this knowledge or fixing these convictions." What he pressed on her, he diligently practised. He now spent several hours daily in earnest study of the Scripture; he took lodgings in the Adelphi, that he might be within reach of pastoral instructions which simply inculcated its truths; and he began to seek the friendship of those who feared God. He withdrew his name from all the clubs of which he was a member . . . a precaution, which he thought essential to his safety in the critical circumstances in which he was placed. "Living in town," he says, "disagrees with me, I must endeavour to find Christian converse in the country."[43] To this he was seasonably invited two days afterward, by his near connexion Mr. Thornton.

TO WILLIAM WILBERFORCE, ESQ.

"Clapham, Dec. 24.

"My dear Sir,

You may easier conceive than I can express the satisfaction I had from a few minutes' converse with

[43] Journal, Dec. 22.

Mr. Newton yesterday afternoon. As in nature, so in grace, what comes very quickly forward, rarely abides long: I am aware of your difficulties, which call for great prudence and caution. Those that believe, must not make haste, but be content to go God's pace, and watch the leadings of his providence, as of the pillar and the cloud formerly. There is a danger in running from church to church to hear: more profit is obtained under one or two ministers. You cannot be too wary in forming connexions. The fewer new friends, perhaps, the better. I shall at any time be glad to see you here, and can quarter you, and let you be as retired as possible, and hope we shall never be on a footing of ceremony.

I am, my dear Sir,
your most devoted kinsman,
JOHN THORNTON."

"By Newton's advice," he says, "Jan. 3rd, went to Mr. Thornton's; dined with them—J. Thornton perfectly happy and composed. I will go there as often as I dare any where. [44] Long talk with Unwin;[45] he is right. To Mahon's: he earnestly busy about useful things, but all of this life—returned—dined and slept at Pitt's. Jan. 11th. To town and Woolnooth—after church, brought Mr. Newton down in chaise—dined and slept at Wimbledon—composure and happiness of a true Christian: he read the account of his poor niece's death, and shed tears of joy. 12th.

[44] Jan. 5.

[45] Rev. John Unwin, Vicar of Stock.

Newton staid—Thornton Astell surprised us together on the common in the evening. Expect to hear myself now universally given out to be a methodist: may God grant it may be said with truth."

To his mother, who had been alarmed by some such rumour, he explained soon afterwards his real sentiments. "It is not, believe me, to my own imagination, or to any system formed in my closet, that I look for my principles; it is to the very source to which you refer me, the Scriptures. . . . . All that I contend for is, that we should really make this book the criterion of our opinions and actions, and not read it and then think that we do so of course; but if we do this, we must reckon on not finding ourselves able to comply with all those customs of the world, in which many who call themselves Christians are too apt to indulge without reflection: . . . . we must of course [therefore] be subject to the charge of excess and singularity. But in what will this singularity consist? Not merely in indifferent things; no, in these our Saviour always conformed, and took occasion to check an unnecessary strictness into which he saw men were led by overstraining a good principle. In what then will these peculiarities appear? Take our great Master's own words; 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength; and thy neighbour as thyself.' It would be easy to dilate on this text; and I am afraid that we should find at the close of the discourse that the picture was very unlike the men of this world.

'But who is my neighbour?' Here, too, our Saviour has instructed us by the parable which follows. It is evident we are to consider our peculiar situations, and in these to do all the good we can. Some men are thrown into public, some have their lot in private life. These different states have their corresponding duties; and he whose destination is of the former sort, will do as ill to immure himself in solitude, as he who is only a village Hampden would, were he to head an army or address a senate. What I have said will, I hope, be sufficient to remove any apprehensions that I mean to shut myself up either in my closet in town, or in my hermitage in the country. No, my dear mother, in my circumstances this would merit no better name than desertion; and if I were thus to fly from the post where Providence has placed me, I know not how I could look for the blessing of God upon my retirement: and without this heavenly assistance, either in the world or in solitude our own endeavours will be equally ineffectual. When I consider the particulars of my duty, I blush at the review; but my shame is not occasioned by my thinking that I am too studiously diligent in the business of life; on the contrary, I then feel that I am serving God best when from proper motives I am most actively engaged in it. What humbles me is, the sense that I forego so many opportunities of doing good; and it is my constant prayer, that God will enable me to serve him more steadily, and my fellow-creatures more assiduously: and I trust that my prayers will be granted

through the intercession of that Saviour 'by whom' only 'we have access with confidence into this grace wherein we stand;' and who has promised that he will lead on his people from strength to strength, and gradually form them to a more complete resemblance of their divine original." [46]

"This is not the heated tone of enthusiasm, but the sober reality of a reasonable faith. It was to a gradual work that he looked forward; yet at this time a real change was passing over all his feelings and principles of action. So he ever judged himself. "Your letter," he wrote ten years later to a college friend, "touches a string in my heart which sounds in unison with your declaration, that you look back on the interval which has elapsed since our being fellow-collegians with a sort of melancholy sensibility. But I find myself constrained to add that the prospect, closed as it is with the view of the time I passed at Cambridge, presents to my eye a still deeper tinge. It is a gloomy and humiliating retrospect to one who, like myself, can behold only a long period of what our master poet has so emphatically styled 'shapeless idleness;' the most valuable years of life wasted, and opportunities lost, which can never be recovered. Your too tender allowance for my youth represents me to you in a less unfavourable point of view; but this, alas, is the true one, and it is scarce too strong to say, that I seem to myself to have awakened about nine or ten years ago from a dream, to have recovered,

[46] Feb. 19.

as it were, the use of my reason after a delirium. In fact till then I wanted first principles; those principles at least which alone deserve the character of wisdom, or bear the impress of truth. Emulation, and a desire of distinction, were my governing motives; and ardent after the applause of my fellow-creatures, I quite forgot that I was an accountable being; that I was hereafter to appear at the bar of God; that if Christianity were not a fable, it was infinitely important to study its precepts, and when known to obey them; that there was at least such a probability of its not being a fable, as to render it in the highest degree incumbent on me to examine into its authenticity diligently, anxiously, and without prejudice. I know but too well that I am not now what I ought to be; yet I trust I can say, 'Non sum qualis eram,' and I hope, through the help of that gracious Being who has promised to assist our weak endeavours, to become more worthy of the name of Christian; more living above the hopes and fears, the vicissitudes and evils of this world; more active in the discharge of the various duties of that state in which the providence of God has placed me, and more desirous of fulfilling his will and possessing his favour. I find it difficult to break off." [47]

It was to this gradual advance, rather than to sudden changes, that he always looked. "Watch and pray," he wrote earnestly to his sister; [48] "read the word of God, imploring that true wisdom which may

[47] To Mr. O'Hara, June 27, 1795.

[48] May 21.

enable you to comprehend and fix it in your heart, that it may gradually produce its effect under the operation of the Holy Spirit, in renewing the mind and purifying the conduct. This it will do more and more the longer we live under its influence; and it is to the honour of religion, that those who when they first began to run the Christian course, were in extremes.. enthusiastical perhaps, or rigidly severe.. will often by degrees lose their several imperfections, which though by the world laid unfairly to the account of their religion, were yet undoubtedly so many disparagements to it:... like some of our Westmoreland evenings, when though in the course of the day the skies have been obscured by clouds and vapours, yet towards its close the sun beams forth with unsullied lustre, and descends below the horizon in the full display of all his glories: shall I pursue the metaphor, just to suggest, that this is the earnest of a joyful rising, which will not be disappointed? The great thing we have to do, is to be perpetually reminding ourselves that we are but strangers and pilgrims, having no abiding city, but looking for a city which hath foundations; and by the power of habit which God has been graciously pleased to bestow upon us, our work will every day become easier, if we accustom ourselves to cast our care on him, and labour in a persuasion of his cooperation. The true Christian will desire to have constant communion with his Saviour. The eastern nations had their talismans, which were to advertise

them of every danger, and guard them from every mischief. Be the love of Christ our talisman."

He who thus sought for peace, could not fail of finding it. Upon Good Friday, April 14th, he for the first time communicated; and upon the following Easter Sunday enters in his Journal: "At Stock with the Unwins—day delightful, out almost all of it—communicated—very happy."

TO MISS WILBERFORCE.

"Stock, April 16, 1786.

"About five o'clock yesterday I put myself into a post-chaise, and in four hours found myself safely lodged with the vicar of Stock. It is more than a month since I slept out of town, and I feel all that Milton attributes to the man who has been

'long in populous cities pent,
Where houses thick and sewers annoy the air.'

I scarce recollect to have spent so pleasant a day as that which is now nearly over. My heart opens involuntarily to Unwin and his wife; I fancy I have been with them every day since we first became acquainted at Nottingham, and expand to them with all the confidence of a twelve years' intimacy. Can my dear sister wonder that I call on her to participate in the pleasure I am tasting. I know how you sympathize in the happiness of those you love, and I could not therefore forgive myself if I were to keep

my raptures to myself, and not invite you to partake of my enjoyment. The day has been delightful. I was out before six, and made the fields my oratory, the sun shining as bright and as warm as at Midsummer. I think my own devotions become more fervent when offered in this way amidst the general chorus, with which all nature seems on such a morning to be swelling the song of praise and thanksgiving; and except the time that has been spent at church and at dinner . . and neither in the sanctuary nor at table I trust, had I a heart unwarmed with gratitude to the Giver of all good things . . I have been all day basking in the sun. On any other day I should not have been so happy: a sense that I was neglecting the duties of my situation might have interrupted the course of my enjoyments, and have taken from their *totality;* for in such a situation as mine every moment may be made useful to the happiness of my fellow-creatures. But the sabbath is a season of rest, in which we may be allowed to unbend the mind, and give a complete loose to those emotions of gratitude and admiration, which a contemplation of the works, and a consideration of the goodness, of God cannot fail to excite in a mind of the smallest sensibility. And surely this sabbath, of all others, is that which calls forth these feelings in a supreme degree; a frame of united love and triumph well becomes it, and holy confidence and unrestrained affection. May every sabbath be to me, and to those I love, a renewal of these feelings, of which the small tastes we have in this life should

make us look forward to that eternal rest, which awaits the people of God; when the whole will be a never-ending enjoyment of those feelings of love and joy and admiration and gratitude, which are, even in the limited degree we here experience them, the truest sources of comfort; when these, I say, will dictate perpetual songs of thanksgiving without fear and without satiety. My eyes are bad, but I could not resist the impulse I felt to call on you and tell you how happy I have been."

The sky was now brightening over him into a clearer sunshine. "By degrees," he said in the calm retrospect of a peaceful age, "by degrees the promises and offers of the gospel produced in me something of a settled peace of conscience. I devoted myself for whatever might be the term of my future life, to the service of my God and Saviour, and with many infirmities and deficiencies, through his help, I continue until this day."

CHAPTER V.

APRIL 1786 TO SEPTEMBER 1787.

Registry and Surgical-Subject Bills—Gives up his villa at Wimbledon—Journal—Intercourse with his family and friends—Employment of time—Visit to Bath—Returns to London Feb. 1787—State of religion—Resolves to attempt its revival—Society for the reformation of manners—He visits the Bishops and establishes the association.

In the spring of 1786, Mr. Wilberforce returned an altered man to his business in the House of Commons. There were indeed no external symptoms to announce the change which had passed over him. "Though I had told Pitt," he says, "that I could not promise him unqualified support, I was surprised to find how generally we agreed." Yet many silent intimations now bespoke the presence of higher motives than a mere desire of personal distinction. In this very session he was diligently occupied with two important measures. Hopeless, after Mr. Pitt's failure, of at present carrying any general measure of parliamentary reform, he applied himself to introduce some practical improvements into the representation of the people. The plan which he proposed was aimed directly at purifying county elections, by

providing a general registration of the freeholders, and holding the poll in various places at the same time.

He had at first proposed to limit his attempt to Yorkshire, which chiefly needed such a change; but at the request of Lord Mahon, its mover, who during this session succeeded to a seat in the Upper House, he undertook the conduct of a general measure to the same effect: "Fought through Lord Stanhope's bill," he says, May 15th. In the House of Lords it was afterwards defeated, "by a coalition of the King's friends and the Whig aristocracy."[1] His second measure was defeated in the House of Lords: it was a bill by which the power the judges already possessed of giving up the bodies of convicted murderers after execution to surgical dissection, was extended to the case of certain other felons. The reception of this measure in the House of Lords, was his first experience of a mode of treatment with which in his conduct of the Abolition he was afterwards made too well acquainted. It was thrown out through the influence of Lord Loughborough, who boldly asserted that it was the project of an inexperienced youth, unacquainted with the law. "If this were fact," Mr. Wilberforce writes to Mr. Hey of Leeds, at whose suggestion he undertook the measure, "you would have just reason to complain of my having taken so little pains to insure the success of your proposal; but the case is directly the reverse: I was aware how necessary

[1] Wyvill's Parliamentary Papers, iv. 542.

it was to secure the concurrence of the gentlemen of the profession, and so put the business a good deal into their hands. The Solicitor-General drew up the Bill; the Attorney-General corrected it; it was then put into the hands of one of the most active judges, who undertook to communicate upon the subject with the rest of the bench at a general meeting the very next day; and at the same time I desired some of the principal lawyers to bespeak a favourable reception of it with any of the judges over whom they possessed influence. The Bill was returned to me with some amendments suggested in writing; and though I disliked the alterations, yet on grounds of policy I submitted to them."[2]—Lord Loughborough, at this time a bitter oppositionist, meant only to discredit the lawyers who adhered to Mr. Pitt.

In the latter part of the session Mr. Wilberforce, who delighted in escaping for a single night from London, "began to sleep constantly at Wimbledon;" yet thinking it an unfavourable "situation for his servants," a needless increase of his personal expenses, and a cause of some loss of time, he determined to forego in future the luxury of such a villa. The influence of his new principles was rapidly pervading all his conduct. After a public breakfast given at this time he subjected himself to the severest scrutiny. "In how sad a state," he says, "is my soul to-day! Yesterday when I had company at Wimbledon, I gave the reins to [myself]; sometimes forgetting, at others

[2] July 13.

acting in defiance of God. If Christ's promise, that he will hear those who call upon him, were less direct and general, I durst not plead for mercy, but should fall into despair; and from what I perceive of the actual workings of my soul, the next step would be an abandoning of myself to all impiety. But Christ has graciously promised that he will be made unto us not redemption only but sanctification. O! give me a new heart, and put a right spirit within me, that I may keep thy statutes and do them. This week has been sadly spent; I will keep a more strict watch over myself by God's grace."[3]

Nor was this watchful self-inspection a rare thing—the result of his conscience being alarmed by some compliance with the temptations by which he was surrounded; it was growing into his daily habit.—"To endeavour from this moment," he says, June 21st, "to amend my plan for time, and to take account of it—to begin to-morrow. I hope to live more than heretofore to God's glory and my fellow-creatures' good, and to keep my heart more diligently. Books to be read—Locke's Essay—Marshall's Logic—Indian Reports. To keep a proposition book with an index—a friend's book" (i. e. memoranda to render his intercourse with them more useful according to their characters and circumstances)—"a common-place book, serious and profane—a Christian-duty paper. To try this plan for a fortnight, and then make alterations in it as I shall see fit. To animate

[3] Journal, June 18.

myself to a strict observance of my rules by thinking of what Christ did and suffered for us; and that this life will soon be over, when a sabbath will remain for the people of God.

"June 22nd. Near three hours going to and seeing Albion Mill. Did not think enough of God. Did not actually waste much time, but too dissipated when I should have had my thoughts secretly bent on God. Meditation, 'What shall I do to be saved?'—23rd. Thought too faintly. Meditation, 'Heart deceitful above all things.'—25th. I this day received the sacrament: I fear too hastily; though I thought it right not to suffer myself to be determined by my momentary feelings. I do not think I have a sufficiently strong conviction of sin; yet I see plainly that I am an ungrateful, stupid, guilty creature. I believe that Christ died that all such, who would throw themselves on him, renouncing every claim of their own and relying on his assurance of free pardon, might be reconciled to God, and receive the free gift of his Holy Spirit to renew them after the image of God in righteousness and true holiness; and I hope in time to find such a change wrought by degrees in myself, as may evidence to me that he has called me from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.—I wander dreadfully at church.

"July 2nd. I take up my pen because it is my rule; but I have not been examining myself with that seriousness with which we ought to look into our-

selves from time to time. That wandering spirit and indolent way of doing business are little if at all defeated, and my rules, resolved on with thought and prayer, are forgotten. O my God, grant that I may be watchful, and not mistake that disapprobation which cannot but arise in me when I look into myself and recollect all my advantages, and my first sensations and resolutions, and how little the event is answerable—let me not mistake this for that contrition and repentance which operates upon the mind with a settled force, and keeps the whole man . . if not always, yet for the most part . . waiting and anxiously looking for God."[4]

With the close of the session "I got off at last from town," says the Diary. "July 6th. Slept at Pepper's,[5] Highgate; and Friday at Grantham; thence through Hull to Scarborough." Here he joined his mother and sister, and with them the following week arrived at Wilford, the seat of his cousin Mr. Samuel Smith. His first care was to recommend his new opinions by greater kindness in domestic life. Strange rumours of his altered habits had preceded his arrival, and his mother was prepared to mourn over eccentric manners and enthusiastic principles. All that she observed was greater kindness and evenness of temper. "It may tend," he had written down before he joined her as a rule for his observance, "to remove prejudices of . . . .[6] if I am more kind and affectionate than ever,—consult

[4] Journal. [5] Pepper Arden's. [6] A blank in the original.

her more,—show respect for her judgment, and manifest rather humility in myself than dissatisfaction concerning others." His habitual cheerfulness, and the patient forbearance of a temper naturally quick, could not escape her notice; and her friend Mrs. Sykes, who had shared in her suspicions, remarked shrewdly, when they parted company at Scarborough, "If this is madness, I hope that he will bite us all." At Wilford he remained almost two months, diligently employing the quiet time afforded him by its retirement. The entrance of God's word into his heart gave light to his intellectual as well as to his moral nature. A keen remembrance of wasted time . . "what madness, I said to myself, is this! here have I been throwing away my time all my life past!". . and a sense of his deficiency in the power of steady application, led him to set about educating himself. Various and accurate were now his studies, but the book which he studied most carefully, and by which perhaps above all others, his mental faculties were perfected, was the Holy Scripture. This he read and weighed and pondered over, studying its connexion and details, and mastering especially, in their own tongue, the apostolical epistles. This was his chief occupation at Wilford. It was now his daily care to instruct his understanding and discipline his heart. Nor was it an easy path upon which he had set out. Though its later stages were gladdened by a settled peace, at this period almost every entry of his Journal records a struggle and a conflict "At

church, I wander more than ever," he says July 30th, "and can scarce keep awake—my thoughts are always straying. Do Thou, O God, set my affections on purer pleasures. Christ should be a Christian's delight and glory. I will endeavour by God's help to excite in myself an anxiety and longing for the joys of heaven, and for deliverance from this scene of ingratitude and sin; yet, mistake not impatience under the fatigues of the combat for a lawful and indeed an enjoined earnestness for, and anticipation of the crown of victory. I say solemnly in the presence of God this day, that were I to die, I know not what would be my eternal portion. If I live in some degree under the habitual impression of God's presence, yet I cannot, or rather I will not, keep true to him; and every night I have to look back on a day misemployed, or not improved with fervency and diligence. O God! do Thou enable me to live more to Thee, to look to Jesus with a single eye, and by degrees to have the renewed nature implanted in me, and the heart of stone removed." And again, a fortnight later,[7] he says, "I see plainly the sad way in which I am going on. Of myself I have not power to change it. Do Thou, O Thou Saviour of sinners, have mercy on me, and let me not be an instance of one who having month after month despised Thy goodness and long-suffering, has treasured up to himself wrath against the day of wrath. The sense of God's presence seldom stays on my mind when I am in company;

[7] Journal, Aug. 13.

and at times I even have doubts and difficulties about the truth of the great doctrines of Christianity." Yet in spite of difficulties he was resolved to persevere.—"With God," he reasons with himself, "nothing is impossible. Work out then thy own salvation. Purify thy heart, thou double-minded—labour to enter into that rest. The way is narrow; the enemies are many, to thee particularly; . . rich, great, &c.;[8]. . but then we have God and Christ on our side: we have heavenly armour; the crown is everlasting life, and the struggle how short, compared with the eternity which follows it! Yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry." While he thus encouraged himself, hoping against hope, there were at times already on his path gleams of brighter light. "On this day," he says August 24th, "I complete my twenty-seventh year. What reason have I for humiliation and gratitude! May God, for Christ's sake, increase my desire to acquire the Christian temper and live the Christian life, and enable me to carry this desire into execution." A few days later[9] he adds, "I am just returned from receiving the sacrament. I was enabled to be earnest in prayer, and to be contrite and humble under a sense of my unworthiness, and of the infinite mercy of God in Christ. I hope that I desire from my heart to lead henceforth a life more worthy of the Christian profession. May it be my meat and drink to do the will of God, my Father. May He daily

[8] Vide Matt. xix. 23. [9] Journal, Sept. 3.

renew me by His Holy Spirit, and may I walk before Him in a frame made up of fear, and gratitude, and humble trust, and assurance of His fatherly kindness and constant concern for me."

This progress was the fruit of unremitting toil and watchfulness. "My chief temptations," he says, "against which to guard this week particularly, are, first,—My thoughts wandering when reading or doing any thing. Secondly,—Losing sight of God in company and at meals. This often begins by an affected vivacity. Thirdly,—I am apt to favour my wandering temper by too short and broken periods of study. To form my plan as carefully as I can to prevent these. Think how to serve those you are in the house with—in the village—your constituents. Look to God through Christ . . . How does my experience convince me that true religion is to maintain communion with God, and that it all goes together.—Let this be a warning . . . Contempt of this world in itself, and views constantly set upon the next. Frequent aspirations. To call in at some houses in the village. To endeavour to keep my mind in a calm, humble frame—not too much vivacity. To put my prayers into words to prevent wandering. Consider always before you take up any book what is your peculiar object in reading it, and keep that in view. Recollect all you read is then only useful when applied to purify the heart and life, or to fit you for the better discharge of its duties. To recapitulate verbally, discutiendi causâ. Let me try by prayer and contemplation

to excite strong desires for future heavenly joys—to trust less to my own resolutions and more to Christ."[10]

Upon the 7th of September he was "at the cutlers' feast at Sheffield;"[11] but did not stay the ball, and returned upon the 8th to Wilford. Upon the 20th he went "to Major Cartwright's, Marnham, staid one day, and then on to Hull." Here he remained a fortnight with his mother. "Visited my friends—Basket came to see me." "Remember," he says here, "to pray to God that I may be cheerful without being dissipated. Remember your peculiar duties arising out of your parliamentary situation, and wherever you are, be thinking how you may best answer the ends of your being, and use the opportunities then offered to you. Above all, let me watch and pray with unremitting fervency; when tempted, recollect that Christ, who was also tempted, sympathizes with thy weakness, and that he stands ready to support thee, if thou wilt sincerely call on him for help."[12] From Hull he set out for Leeds upon the 11th of October and upon the 12th was domesticated with Mr. Hey, "in a family that really appears to be serving God—Happy people! Whilst with him, saw my friends, the manufactory," &c.[13]

On his road from Leeds to London, he wrote upon the 20th of October, "from the King's highway,"

[10] Journal, Aug. 4.
[11] Diary.
[12] Journal, Oct. 8.
[13] Diary.

TO LORD MUNCASTER, MUNCASTER CASTLE, CUMBERLAND.

"My dear Muncaster,

I shall not begin by apologizing to you for my silence, but by taking you to task for yours. You have no such cause to plead as I have, and to expect a half-blind man to be as good a correspondent as one that has the perfect use of his eyes, and in my circumstances to call on me to return you letter for letter, is so far from putting things on an equal footing, that I am astonished such a proposition should be countenanced by an inhabitant of a country, which having been of late so much engaged in making treaties,[14] ought to be ready at every principle of equitable negociation. When I fix these as the terms of our epistolary connexion, I shall *put you on the footing of the most favoured nation*, and let that be sufficient.

"I have often meditated, and still more frequently longed for, an excursion into your wondrous country; but have not been able to gratify my wishes, and am now bound for the south. My summer has been spent with my sister, the state of whose health, and the nature of whose complaint, rendered my society and support peculiarly acceptable. If you have ever known nervous people, you will fully enter into this. And while so near a relation would in any case have a right to such good offices, my dear sister's worth and affection give her

[14] Convention with Spain was signed July 14th; Treaty of Commerce with France, Sept. 26th.

a more than ordinary claim to my tenderness and regard. Since I left her, I have been for a few days at Leeds, consulting Mr. Hey about my eyes and general health. Frequent conversations with him have impressed me with the opinion of his skill. He does not express himself over-confidently, for which I like him the better; but he says that I may very reasonably hope, that by a perseverance in the plan he recommends, I shall gradually recover health and strength, in both of which he thinks I have suffered by living too low; and he advises a strict adherence to meat and wine, as the most trusty and effectual restoratives. I must do you the justice to recollect that this is the very system you yourself have so often preached up to me; and as is usual when people agree with us in opinion, I have no doubt of your admitting him to be a most judicious practitioner, on the mere strength of his prescription. Another part of his directions is, that I should try *with caution* the Bath water, and this I shall possibly do before the meeting of parliament, though my motions are somewhat uncertain, for they will partly depend on the state in which I find poor Eliot and Pitt. I well know how feelingly you have sympathized with them.[15] I don't believe there ever existed between brother and sister a more affectionate attachment, than between Pitt and Lady Harriet. Public business, however, will be an assistance to him in getting over the shock, by necessarily calling him

[15] Lady Harriet Eliot, second daughter of the first Lord Chatham, died Sept. 25th, 1786.

from his own melancholy reflections; but I fear it will go hard with Eliot, whose natural temper is ill calculated for bearing up against such a stroke. If either of them should be in such a state, as that I should think my company would be of material service, I shall dedicate myself to this employment; if otherwise, to King Bladud.

"O my dear Muncaster, how can we go on as if present things were to last for ever, when so often reminded by accidents like these, 'that the fashion of this world passes away!' Every day I live I see greater reason in considering this life but as a passage to another. And when summoned to the tribunal of God, to give an account of all things we have done in the body, how shall we be confounded by the recollection of those many instances, in which we have relinquished a certain eternal for an uncertain transitory good! You are not insensible to these things, but you think of them rather like a follower of Socrates than a disciple of Jesus. You see how frankly I deal with you, in truth I can no otherwise so well show the interest I take in your happiness: these thoughts are uppermost in my heart, and they will come forth when I do not repress my natural emotions. Oh that they had a more prevailing influence over my disposition and conduct; then might I hope to afford men occasion 'to glorify our Father which is in heaven;' and I should manifest the superiority of the principle which actuated me, by the more than ordinary spirit and activity by which my

parliamentary, my domestic, and all my other duties were marked and characterized.

"Mr. Hey did not advise me to write as though I were a sound man, and I must not forget that I am crippled in my operations, for though in the heat of action I forget my aches and sprains, I shall only feel them the more when I am cold again. This letter is one continued egotism, yet my vanity will not suffer me to believe that it will be less acceptable to you on that account. I have not opportunity left to say a word of politics, to abuse the new peers, &c. &c.[16] I will not lay aside my pen however without desiring my best remembrances to Lady M. & Co. and so saying I subscribe myself,

Yours ever,

W. WILBERFORCE."

He was soon after fixed at Bath; schooling his own heart as carefully amongst its crowded scenes, as he had done in the domestic privacy of Wilford. "I am too apt," he says Nov. 18th, "to be considering how far I may advance towards sin, in animal indulgences particularly; not remembering that a Christian's life is hid with Christ in God, that he ought to have more satisfaction in offering the little sacrifices God requires, as the willing tribute of a grateful heart, than in gratifying fleshly appetites; and that he should look for his happiness in fellowship with God, and

[16] June 15th, Mr. Jenkinson was gazetted as Lord Hawkesbury; August 8th, Sir Harbord Harbord as Lord Suffield, and Sir Guy Carleton as Lord Dorchester.

view with jealousy whatever tends to break in on this communion. I am apt to be thinking it enough to spend so many hours in reading, religious service, study, &c. What a sad sign is this! how different from that delight in the law and service of God in the inner man, which St. Paul speaks of, and which was so eminent in David! O my God, for the sake of Thy beloved Son, our propitiation, through whom we may have access to the throne of grace, give me a new heart —give me a real desire and earnest longing for one. I have got a trick of congratulating myself when I look at my watch, or the clock strikes, 'Well, one hour more of this day is gone.' What ingratitude is this to God, who spares this cumberer of the ground from day to day, to give him time for repentance!" "Walk charitably," he writes down as his law; "wherever you are be on your guard, remembering that your conduct and conversation may have some effect on the minds of those with whom you are, in rendering them more or less inclined to the reception of Christian principles, and the practice of a Christian life. Be ready with subjects for conversation,—for private thought, as Watts and Doddridge recommend.—This week to find opportunities for opening to M. B. and to endeavour to impress her deeply with a sense of the importance of the one thing needful, and to convince her that the loose religion and practice of common professors is not the religion and practice of the Bible."[17]

[17] Journal

Early in the following year he was again in London, attending in his place in parliament. His chief exertions in the House this session, were efficient speeches in behalf of Mr. Pitt's treaties with France[18] and Portugal;[19] and upon the impeachment of Mr. Warren Hastings.[20] But his thoughts were principally occupied through this spring in concerting measures for a public effort at reforming manners. He had been roused out of a deadly lethargy, and when he looked around him on the aspect of society, he saw how universal was the evil from which he had himself escaped. He could not wonder that the gay and busy world were almost ignorant of Christianity, amidst the lukewarmness and apathy which possessed the very watchmen of the faith. The deadly leaven of Hoadley's latitudinarian views had spread to an alarming extent amongst the clergy; and whilst numbers confessedly agreed with his Socinian tenets, few were sufficiently honest to resign with Mr. Lindsey[21] the endowments of the church. The zealous spirit which had begun to spread during the reign of Anne,[22] had been benumbed by this evil influence. No efforts were now making to disseminate in foreign lands the light of Christ's gospel. At home a vast population was springing up around our manufactories, but there was no thought of providing for them church accommodation. Non-residence without cause and without

[18] Feb. 6. [19] Feb. 15. [20] Feb. 7.

[21] The Rev. Theophilus Lindsey had resigned the living of Catterick in 1773. Sup. p. 76.

[22] Vide Nelson's Address to Persons of Quality.

scruple was spreading through the church; and all the cords of moral obligation were relaxed as the spirit of religion slumbered. Against this universal apathy John Wesley had recently arisen with a giant's strength. But his mission was chiefly to the poor, and his measures even from the first were such as fostered a sectarian spirit. There was needed some reformer of the nation's morals, who should raise his voice in the high places of the land; and do within the church, and near the throne, what Wesley had accomplished in the meeting, and amongst the multitude. This, in its whole extent, was a work which the genius of our church could hardly have committed to the hands of any ecclesiastic; while it required for its proper execution the full devotion of rank, and influence, and talents of the highest order. To this high and self-denying office God put it into the heart of his servant to aspire. "God," he says, "has set before me as my object the reformation of [my country's] manners."[23] Having once accepted this commission, he devoted all his powers to its fulfilment, and for years kept it steadily in view in all his undertakings. His first great effort was suggested by Dr. Woodward's "History of the Society for the Reformation of Manners in the year 1692." He proposed to form a similar association, to resist the spread of open immorality. This had been the second object of the earlier society, its first aim being the edification of its members. "I am conscious," he tells Mr. Hey,

[23] Journal.

"that ours is an infinitely inferior aim, yet surely it is of the utmost consequence, and worthy of the labours of a whole life."[24] In this zealous spirit he undertook the work. He endeavoured to infuse amongst his numerous friends a determination to resist the growing vices of the times. "The barbarous custom of hanging," he tells one of them,[25] "has been tried too long, and with the success which might have been expected from it. The most effectual way to prevent the greater crimes is by punishing the smaller, and by endeavouring to repress that general spirit of licentiousness, which is the parent of every species of vice. I know that by regulating the external conduct we do not at first change the hearts of men, but even they are ultimately to be wrought upon by these means, and we should at least so far remove the obtrusiveness of the temptation, that it may not provoke the appetite, which might otherwise be dormant and inactive."

"In our free state," he maintained, "it is peculiarly needful to obtain these ends by the agency of some voluntary association; for thus only can those moral principles be guarded, which of old were under the immediate protection of the government. It thus becomes to us, like the ancient censorship, the guardian of the religion and morals of the people. The Attorney-General and Secretary of State, who alone in our country can be thought at all to fill this post, are too much cramped by their political relations to

[24] June 12. [25] Mr. Wyvill.

discharge its duties with effect; yet some such official check on vice is absolutely needed. It is not here as with personal injury, which will always be suppressed by private prosecution; for though the mischief done by blasphemous and indecent publications and other incentives to licentiousness be greater than most private wrongs, yet it is so fractional, and divided amongst so many thousands, that individuals can scarcely be expected to take up the cause of virtue."[26]—Having thus prepared men's minds for further measures, his next object was to find a proper opportunity for founding the association. The plan which he adopted for this purpose was to obtain a Royal Proclamation against vice and immorality, and then suggest the formation of an association for carrying it into effect.

TO WILLIAM HEY, ESQ. LEEDS.

"London, May 29th, 1787.

"My dear Sir,

I trust in a very few days you will hear of a Proclamation being issued for the discouragement of vice, of letters being written by the secretaries of state to the lords-lieutenant, expressing his Majesty's pleasure, that they recommend it to the justices throughout their several counties to be active in the execution of the laws against immoralities, and of a society's being formed in London for the purpose

[26] Con. Mem.

of carrying into effect his Majesty's good and gracious intentions. I have been some time at work, the matter is now I hope brought to a crisis; and the persons with whom I have concerted my measures, are so trusty, temperate, and unobnoxious, that I think I am not indulging a vain expectation in persuading myself that something considerable may be done. It would give you no little pleasure, could you hear how warmly the Archbishop of Canterbury expresses himself: the interest he takes in the good work does him great credit, and he assures me that one still greater, to whom he has opened the subject in form, and suggested the measures above mentioned, is deeply impressed with the necessity of opposing the torrent of profaneness which every day makes more rapid advances. What think you of my having myself received a formal invitation to cards, for Sunday evening, from a person high in the King's service.

"I mean the society to publish a list of its members, and an account of its institution, when sufficiently numerous and respectable. It should consist of persons of consequence in every line of life, the professions, members of both Houses, merchants in the city, aldermen, &c. I have no doubt of the Duke of Montagu's accepting the office of president, and have reason to believe that the Archbishop of Canterbury will give us his name, in which case the rest of the bench will follow his example. The objects to which the committee will direct their attention are

the offences specified in the Proclamation,—profanation of the sabbath, swearing, drunkenness, licentious publications, unlicensed places of public amusement, the regulation of licensed places, &c. One good consequence that will result from the institution of a society stamped with such authorities, may be the inducing well-meaning and active men to act as magistrates or constables, who have now so little encouragement to discharge obnoxious duties with fidelity and strictness.

"It is singular, that whilst we have been cautiously and with measured steps proceeding to the desired object, our Pontefract friends have got before us. Much use I trust may be made of their resolutions. We mean to transmit them with directions for the formation of societies throughout the country. I need not add, that till all this comes to your ears through some other channel, you must be silent on the subject.

Believe me to be ever yours,

W. WILBERFORCE."

His first object was to prevail upon the bishops to become members of the new association; and to effect this, he resolved upon applying personally to as many as he could, when they had retired to their respective sees.[27] He wished to communicate with them indi-

[27] "The bishops, in consequence of a message from his Majesty, are gone into their respective diocesses, for the purpose of giving instruction to their clergy for a co-operation with the civil power, that the King's Proclamation may have its full force." Morning Chronicle, July 25th.

vidually, lest the scruples of a few might prevent the acquiescence of the rest; and he could not issue circulars without putting himself forward as the avowed author of the plan. "In your several disclosures," he tells his friend Lord Muncaster, "the less you introduce my name the better. When the several parties come to compare notes hereafter, it may appear as if I had been unseasonably, I had almost said, impertinently active, and I should grievously regret any personal jealousy which might operate to the prejudice of the great object which we have in view."[28]

He determined therefore to travel round the country to the residence of those whose countenance he hoped to gain; and upon the 21st of June, in spite of the fatigue of the last session, and a strong desire "to put off this whole business for a time, and allow myself a course of the Bath waters,.. since it might be dangerous to suffer the impression which the Proclamation may have produced to wear away, before I am so firm as not to fear my gentlemen drawing back,"[29] . . he set off from London without communicating to any one the purpose of his journey. He spared no labour to attain his object, visiting in succession the episcopal residences of the prelates of Worcester, Hereford, Norwich, Lincoln, York, and Lichfield,[30] and gaining many of the bishops as the first promoters of his

[28] July 23. [29] To Mr. Hey, June 12.

[30] He had designed to visit Chester, but a favourable answer from the Bishop (Porteus) met him on the road.

scheme. He called too upon many influential laymen. At Norwich he lingered a whole day in the hope of seeing Windham, and was followed after his departure by a friendly letter.

"I have seldom felt more vexed," writes Mr. Windham, "than I do at this instant, at hearing, on alighting at the Angel, that you have left Norwich about half an hour. You cannot conceive how much I lament the disappointment; my only consolation is that very little of it has happened through my own fault. If any blame is due, I am punished to the full extent of my deserts in the pleasure I have lost of carrying you back this evening to Felbrigg, of detaining you there just so long as it suited you to afford me your company, and afterwards of speeding you on your journey by a route more pleasant, and very little longer, than that you have taken. With these prospects I passed a livelier evening yesterday, and came on gaily, partly though not entirely on that account, to Norwich this morning. Among other losses I am to regret that of not being made acquainted with your plan, in which I may venture almost to promise beforehand that I shall be happy to concur."

In his various applications he was no stranger to refusals of co-operation.—"So you wish, young man," said a nobleman whose house he visited, "you wish to be a reformer of men's morals. Look then, and see there what is the end of such reformers," pointing as he spoke to a picture of the crucifixion—no likely argument to disarm a Christian warrior. Yet though

sometimes opposed, upon the whole his plan succeeded. "I find from your servant," writes Sir W. Dolben, "that you have been in all parts of England since I saw you last, and as active as Mr. Howard in this great and congenial work of *yours:* for to you I shall ever attribute the first honour of it." One, at least, amongst his earlier associates joined him zealously in this good work, and long discharged the somewhat irksome service of a regular committee-man. Affliction had opened the heart of Mr. Eliot to the healing power of true religion, and the thoughtless affection of their more careless years ripened into Christian friendship. "I am glad," he writes,[31] "you have found so much success in your plan hitherto, and hope and trust it will go on to receive all to which it is so well entitled. You must be aware, however, that the time for the objections and difficulties to it is not yet arrived, though I know you are prepared to meet them when they come. For me, I am not only willing but desirous of joining myself to it. Lord North's name is sufficient to obviate one difficulty I had respecting it; and for the other, every day decreases it. I have every day less fear of my temper of mind being thought a transitory effect of grief: I feel myself every day looking upon my condition here with more steadiness and resignation, and to a future life with more earnestness and desire. In this state, what assistance I can give to the cause in which you are embarked, I shall be anxious to contribute. God bless you, and make

[31] Aug. 29.

you happy here, as well as hereafter: you have that claim to it, if I may so speak, that you have not required a visitation of providence to turn you to your God."

The society was soon in active and useful operation. The Duke of Montagu opened his house for its reception, and presided over its meetings,—a post which was filled after his death by the late Lord (Chancellor) Bathurst, who was followed by Bishop Porteus: and before its dissolution it had obtained many valuable acts of parliament, and greatly checked the spread of blasphemous and indecent publications.[32] It afforded also a centre from which many other useful schemes proceeded, and was the first example of those various associations, which soon succeeded to the apathy of former years.

By the autumn of this year it was so well established as no longer to require the personal attention of its founder. He therefore left London, and after a short hour in Devonshire fixed himself at Bath. "I find here," writes Hannah More, "a great many friends; but those with whom I have chiefly passed my time are Mr. Wilberforce's family. That young gentleman's character is one of the most extraordinary I ever knew for talents, virtue, and piety. It is difficult not to grow wiser and better every time one converses with him."

[32] Vide Hodgson's Life of Porteus, p. 101.

CHAPTER VI.

SEPTEMBER 1787 TO DECEMBER 1788.

Retirement at Bath—Causes which led him to the Abolition of the Slave Trade—Lady Middleton's suggestion—Letter from C. I. Latrobe—His previous intentions.—Pitt's advice—Slave Trade committee formed—Negociation on the subject with France—His habits in London—Burke—Pitt's interest in the Abolition—Evidence before Privy Council—Wilberforce dangerously ill, and compelled to postpone his motion to the next year—Middle-Passage bill—Cambridge—Westmoreland—King's illness.

At Bath Mr. Wilberforce was for a while removed from the full press of business; and had leisure for more serious contemplation, than was possible in the seasons of active exertion.—"By God's help," he writes, "I will set vigorously about reform. I believe one cause of my having so fallen short is my having aimed no higher. Lord Bacon says, great changes are easier than small ones. Remember, thy situation abounding in comforts requires thee to be peculiarly on thy guard, lest when thou hast eaten and art full thou forget God." And again, on a later day, "It is now a year and three quarters since

I began to have a serious concern about my soul; and little did I then think that this time would have passed to no better purpose, or that I should now be no further advanced in the Christian walk. Two sessions of parliament gone over, yet nothing done for the interests of religion. My intellectual stores not much increased, and I am less able in debate than formerly, which is highly criminal, considering the weight to be derived from credit for eloquence in this country. But the heart is the worst of all. . . Oh let not, Lord, my compunction be so transitory as it has been before, when Thou hast impressed me with a conviction of my danger, but may it be deeply worked into my heart, producing a settled humility, and an unremitting watchfulness against temptation, grounded on a consciousness of my own impotence and proneness to offend."

Yet though so little satisfied with his parliamentary exertions, this year had been in one respect the very crisis of his usefulness. In it he had been led publicly to devote himself to his great work, the Abolition of the Slave Trade. This was the fruit of his religious change; and it is the more necessary distinctly to establish this, because there has gone forth an opinion most injurious to the real spring of all his labours, that he was led by accident to undertake this cause. Thus the late venerable C. Ignatius Latrobe attributed to Lady Middleton the honourable work of having called the appointed champion to the lists: and others, besides Mr. Latrobe, have imagined that

the like merit was claimed by Mr. Clarkson, in his "History of Abolition."[1]

Some extracts from a letter which Mr. L. wrote in 1815 to his daughter, will furnish an interesting statement of his view of this matter.

[1] Of this book it is necessary to declare at once, and with a very painful distinctness, that it conveys an entirely erroneous idea of the Abolition struggle. Without imputing to Mr. Clarkson any intentional unfairness, it may safely be affirmed that his exaggerated estimate of his own services has led him unawares into numberless misstatements. Particular instances might be easily enumerated, but the writers are most anxious to avoid any thing resembling controversy on this subject. Contenting themselves, therefore, with this declaration, they will henceforth simply tell their own story, without pointing out its contradictions of Mr. Clarkson's "History."

This is no new charge. An able writer, in a contemporary review, (Christian Observer, No. 169,) after expressing an earnest desire for a competent history of the Abolition, describes Mr. Clarkson's work as by no means supplying this want; but as "remarkable chiefly for the earnest warmth of heart which it manifests, and for the strange redundancies, and still stranger omissions, and above all, the extravagant egotism with which it abounds." Mr. Wilberforce himself looked into the book, and saw enough to induce him to refuse to read, lest he should be compelled to remark upon it. With a ready forgetfulness of himself, which they who knew him will understand at once, he told Mr. Clarkson, when obliged to give his opinion, that he was entirely satisfied with what was said about himself, but that undoubtedly justice had not been done to Mr. Stephen. In truth, whilst the two volumes are swelled by a detail of the minutiæ of the early business, with which their author was personally conversant, a few pages hurry over the events of eleven important years, from 1794, when Mr. Clarkson left, to 1805, when he resumed his post.

The writers would gladly have omitted all notice of this subject. But the interests of truth, and the character of the great leader in the Abolition struggle, require this avowal. With the same reluctance, and for the same reasons, they insert without any comment certain letters, which they would gladly have suppressed, but which they cannot conceive themselves warranted to omit, inasmuch as they exhibit Mr. Wilberforce and Mr. Clarkson in relations very different from any thing which the "History of Abolition" would suggest.

"At Sea, on board the Brig Albion,
28. 12. South Lat. 18. 38. W. Lon. Dec. 5, 1815.

"My dear C.

You have felt interested in the abolition of the slave trade, and rejoiced with me and many others that our nation has been delivered from the 'blood guiltiness' attached to it. Perhaps you have met with Clarkson's 'History of the Abolition.' He has been charged with egotism by many reviewers, and I believe no one can read it without an impression left upon his mind that the author takes great merit to himself, and almost makes himself out to be the main-spring and chief instrument in bringing about that great event.

"He was aware that such a charge might be brought against him, and in some part of his work makes a kind of apology with a view to avert it, but which, as far as I remember, appeared to me to be rather lame.

"As I happen to know more about that business than many others, I have sometimes been called upon to give my opinion, and, on a certain occasion, did it with such effect, that I was desired to commit it to writing for the information of the public.—What I have heard and seen of those movements which ended in the abolition of the slave trade, if admitted to be correct, will be my warrant for asserting, that this great and momentous event was brought about by the instrumentality of a *woman*.

"When Sir Charles Middleton (afterwards Lord Barham) commanded a man of war, he had a surgeon on board whose name was Ramsay. Sir Charles went to the West Indies, where Mr. Ramsay married a lady of St. Kitt's. It was thought most convenient that Mr. Ramsay should settle in that island, and as he had an inclination to enter into the church, and a living offered, he came home, took orders, and became a clergyman. In St. Kitt's he saw a great deal of the manner of treating the negroes, and felt the greatest pity for them. But having become acquainted with the horrors of the trade, by which they were obtained, he was still more shocked with the indignities and cruelties suffered by those poor creatures on their passage from Africa to the islands, and with the brutal manner of their being bought and sold like cattle. How long he staid in St. Kitt's I have not here the means of ascertaining; but after some years he received a vocation to the living of Teston, near Maidstone in Kent. Here his diligence, usefulness, and urbanity of manners soon brought him into great favour with the family, especially as his mild and charitable disposition well accorded with that of his patroness Mrs. Bouverie and her friend Lady Middleton.—In the course of his frequent conversations, the state of the slaves in the West Indies, and the abominable traffic in human flesh and blood, came into discussion. The ladies were shocked with the details given them by Mr. Ramsay. Lady Middleton's active mind and indefatigable ardour would not suffer the matter to

rest, and she was continually urging Mr. Ramsay to call the attention of the whole nation to such crying sins. To this purpose she wrote him an energetic letter, which you will find in his 'Essay on the Treatment of, and Traffic in, Slaves.' This book caused a great sensation, and raised against Mr. Ramsay a host of enemies. Yet all this which was said and written on the subject might have passed away, and produced as little effect as the declamations and writings of many good men in England and America, and the mental torments experienced and recorded by Mr. Clarkson, but that God put it into the heart of Lady Middleton to venture one step further, and to urge the necessity of bringing the proposed Abolition of the Slave Trade before parliament, as a measure in which the whole nation was concerned.

"This was done in the most natural and simple manner possible, at the conclusion of some very animated expressions of her feelings on considering the national guilt attached to the continuation of such a traffic. Sorry I am, that I did not mark the day when I was witness to that remarkable conversation,[2] which took place at breakfast, Mr. Ramsay, if I mistake not, being present. Lady Middleton, addressing her husband, who was member for Rochester, said, 'Indeed Sir Charles I think you ought to bring the subject before the House, and demand parliamentary inquiry into the nature of a traffic so disgraceful to

[2] It took place during Mr. Latrobe's residence at Teston, in the autumn of 1786.

the British character.' Sir Charles granted the propriety of such an inquiry; but observed, that the cause would be in bad hands if it was committed to him, who had never yet made one speech in the House; but he added, that he should strenuously support any able member who would undertake it.

"This led to an interchange of opinions, respecting the willingness and fitness of several members who were named to brave the storm, and defend the cause of humanity; when some one mentioned Mr. Wilberforce, who had lately come out, and not only displayed very superior talents and great eloquence, but was a decided and powerful advocate of the cause of truth and virtue, and a friend of the minister. He was then at Hull, and Lady Middleton prevailed on Sir Charles immediately to write to him, and propose the subject. He did so, and communicated the letter he had written to the family, as well as Mr. Wilberforce's answer which he received a few days after, both of which I heard with these mine ears. Mr. Wilberforce wrote to the following effect; 'That he felt the great importance of the subject, and thought himself unequal to the task allotted to him, but yet would not positively decline it; adding, that on his return to town he would pay a visit to the family at Teston, and consult with Sir Charles and Lady Middleton, &c. on the subject.'

"After Mr. Wilberforce's return from Yorkshire he visited the family at Teston, as proposed; and as he endeavoured to make himself master of the subject,

and from every accessible quarter to obtain information, Sir Charles sent him to me, to learn what had been effected by our missionaries among the slaves, in the different West India islands; and I furnished him with every species of intelligence in my power.

"My purpose was to show that the abolition of the slave trade was, under God, and when the time was come, the work of a *woman*, even Lady Middleton, who was the honoured instrument of bringing the monster within the range of the artillery of the executive justice of the kingdom, and selecting and rousing that noble champion, who so firmly stood his ground, and persevering from year to year, at last saw his labours crowned with success. Many preparatory steps had been taken by that excellent man, Granville Sharpe, and others; and I believe Mr. Clarkson, when he says that there arose in many places a spirit of general inquiry, without any previous communications, as to the nature of that horrible traffic.

"As to Mr. Clarkson's account, I should have forgiven him the display of his own laborious and unwearied exertions in the cause, in which he certainly exceeded others, had he but done justice to the merits of those, who most contributed to make his labours effectual in accomplishing the desired end.

CHR. IGN. LATROBE."

It must be stated in justice to Mr. Clarkson that he never thought himself entitled to the praise, to which he was supposed by others to have pretended.

In a letter dated August 12th, 1834, he says in answer to this very charge, "that Mr. Wilberforce was represented in the 'History of the Abolition of the Slave Trade,' as entering upon this subject originally at my suggestion,"—"there are no words of mine to this effect; nor any from which such an idea, twist and torture them as you will, can ever be inferred;"—and again, "not one word is said, in the account, of Mr. Wilberforce's having taken up the cause at my suggestion." Of Lady Middleton's application Mr. Wilberforce has said, "It was just one of those many impulses which were all giving to my mind the same direction."[3] Nor was it an unnatural mistake by which those who had not known his previous training attributed his after-conduct, according to their own bias, either to Lady Middleton in 1786, or to Mr Clarkson in 1787. But the real cause of his engaging in the work lay far deeper than any such suggestions. It was the immediate consequences of his altered character. The miseries of Africa had long ago attracted his attention. Even in his boyhood he had written on the subject for the daily journals—"It is," he has said in conversation, "somewhat worthy of attention as indicative of the providential impulses by which we are led into particular lines of conduct, that as early as the year 1780 I had been strongly interested for the West Indian slaves, and in a letter asking my friend Gordon, then going to Antigua, to collect information for me, I expressed my determination, or at

[3] Con. Mem.

least my hope, that some time or other I should redress the wrongs of those wretched and degraded beings."—In November 1783, he records a conversation concerning the condition of the negroes with Mr. Ramsay, who was then upon the eve of publishing the work from which sprung the long and bitter controversy which brought the treatment of the negro race before the public eye. In 1786 was published Mr. Clarkson's first pamphlet on the trade;[4] but through the years 1784 and 1785 Mr. Ramsay fought alone, nor did he ever quit the strife until he sunk under its virulence in the summer of 1789.

Nor was Mr. Wilberforce at this time wanting in many high qualifications for the conduct of the cause. His glowing and persuasive eloquence, his high political influence rarely combined with independence, marked him out as fitted to achieve that deliverance for the oppressed for which his generous mind would naturally long. Yet at this time he wanted that one requisite without which all the rest would have proved insufficient. The statue, indeed, was framed with exquisite symmetry, but the ethereal fire was wanting. Personal ambition and generous impulses would have shrunk from the greatness of the undertaking, or grown wearied in the protracted struggle, and these hitherto had been the main springs of his conduct. "The first years that I was

[4] An Essay on the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species, particularly the African; translated from a Latin dissertation which was honoured with the first prize in the University of Cambridge for the year 1785. With additions; published in June 1786.

in parliament," he has said, "I did nothing—nothing I mean to any good purpose; my own distinction was my darling object." But now he acted upon a new set of principles; his powers of mind, his eloquence in speech, his influence with Mr. Pitt, his general popularity, were now all as talents lent to him by God, and for their due improvement he must render an account. Now, therefore, all his previous interest in the condition of the West Indian slaves led to practical exertion. "God," he says, in undertaking what became at once a sacred charge—"God Almighty has set before me two great objects, the suppression of the slave trade and the reformation of manners."[5] In this spirit he approached the strife, and let it never be forgotten, that it was the fear of God which armed him as the champion of the liberty of man. That it was by this general acquaintance with West Indian matters, and not from any accidental summons, that he was led to turn his attention to the slave trade, he has himself recorded. "It was the condition of the West Indian slaves which first drew my attention, and it was in the course of my inquiry that I was led to Africa and the abolition."[6] These inquiries he was busily pursuing amongst the African merchants throughout the year 1786. "I found them," he says,[7] "at this time ready to give me information freely, the trade not having yet become the subject of alarming discussion, but their accounts were full of prejudice

[5] Journal, Sunday, Oct. 28, 1787.
[6] Letter to James Stephen Esq. Jan. 15, 1817. [7] MS. Mem.

and error. I got also together at my house from time to time persons who knew any thing about the matter." "Several of us met at breakfast at Sir C. Middleton's. I think also at Mr. Bennet Langton's, and I am sure at my own house." Mr. Latrobe has preserved a characteristic notice of one of these interviews when he was seeking in all quarters for information.—"I was breakfasting with Sir C. Middleton, at Somerset House, one Wednesday morning, in the beginning of the year 1787, when he said, 'Pray be at home this morning, for I have engaged Mr. Wilberforce to call upon you and inquire about the slave trade.' I had arranged to spend the day from home, and had left orders that my rooms in Roll's Buildings, Chancery Lane, should have a thorough cleaning. Upon hearing of his intended visit I hastened home to prepare for his reception. A few minutes afterwards he arrived. My sitting room could not be entered, but he volunteered to sit with me in my bed room. The whole scene is now before me; the fire smoked, and I was about to open the window, when he prevented me by saying, I can bear smoke better than the tooth-ache. There we conversed, and I gave him a full account of the trade, our missions in the West Indies, &c. and persuaded him not to bring our missionaries forward, that their labours might not be impeded."

Yet it was not with inconsiderate haste that he undertook the cause. "When I had acquired," he says, "so much information, I began to talk the matter over with Pitt and Grenville. Pitt recommended me to

undertake its conduct, as a subject suited to my character and talents. At length, I well remember, after a conversation in the open air at the root of an old tree at Holwood just above the steep descent into the vale of Keston, I resolved to give notice on a fit occasion in the House of Commons of my intention to bring the subject forward." In the spring of 1787, Mr. Clarkson, who had published a Prize Essay upon the subject in the preceding year, was in London, and was introduced to Mr. Wilberforce; but though they frequently conversed upon the subject, Mr. Wilberforce never divulged his own determination, until at Mr. Bennet Langton's table in answer to a question from his host he avowed it publicly.

Important consequences followed this avowal. From the time of Granville Sharpe's exertions in a kindred cause, and still more since, in 1784, Mr. Ramsay commenced the public controversy, a growing interest in the question had arisen simultaneously in many different places. Several humane men had been for months communicating privately upon the subject, and they now at once determined upon immediate action, and formed themselves into a committee to raise the funds and collect the information necessary for procuring the abolition of the trade. Their first meeting was held upon the 22nd of May, 1787, when Granville Sharpe was elected chairman of the twelve who met together, most of whom were London merchants, and all but two Quakers. This body soon increased and grew into a valuable ally of Mr. Wilber-

force. It was long indeed before his name was openly enrolled amongst their number, because his exertions promised to be more effectual by his being independent of them; but from the first he directed their endeavours.[8] By their means many useful publications were circulated, and a general knowledge of the horrors of the trade extensively diffused; as their agent Mr. Clarkson sought patiently for evidence in Liverpool and Bristol; they raised contributions to defray the general expenses of the cause, and became a central body, from which emanated many similar societies in the chief provincial towns. "At this place," writes a correspondent from Manchester, "large subscriptions have been raised for the slave business, and 'te duce Teucro' we are warm and strenuous."[9] Their great work, and that in which this year they actively engaged, was to rouse the slumbering indignation of the country against the cruelty and bloodshed of the traffic. And here was seen at once the exceeding importance of their leader's character. In the year 1780, the slave trade had attracted Mr. Burke's attention, and he had even proceeded to sketch out a code of regulations which provided for its immediate mitigation and ultimate suppression. But after mature consideration he had abandoned the attempt, from the conviction that the strength of the West Indian body would defeat the

[8] Vide MS. transactions of the Abolition Society.

[9] Letter from T. B. Bayley, Esq. to W. Wilberforce, Esq Dec 15, 1787.

utmost efforts of his powerful party, and cover them with ruinous unpopularity. Nor could any mere political alliance have been ever more likely to succeed. The great interests with which the battle must be fought could be resisted only by the general moral feeling of the nation. There was then no example upon record of any such achievement, and in entering upon the struggle it was of the utmost moment that its leader should be one who could combine, and so render irresistible, the scattered sympathies of the religious classes. Granville Sharpe, the chairman of the London committee, did not fail to point out this advantage. "Mr. W." he writes, "is to introduce the business to the House. The respectability of his position as member for the largest county, the great influence of his personal connexions, added to an amiable and unblemished character, secure every advantage to the cause." Its first supporters accordingly were not found amongst the partisans of political commotion, but amongst the educated and religious. "Many of the clergy," writes Granville Sharpe, "are firm and cordial friends to the undertaking:" and soon after he rejoices "in their continual support." If any thing were wanted to complete this proof, it would be found in the grievous injury the cause sustained in later years from the character of its chief political supporters.

This then was the position Mr. Wilberforce surveyed when musing on his character and duties in the autumn of 1787. Soon afterward he re-

turned to London, and engaging in a correspondence with Mr. Clarkson, he rendered him frequent assistance,[10] and received from him detailed accounts of his progress in collecting evidence. He himself also at this time examined some who were willing to appear as witnesses, and arranged the plan of action on which he determined to proceed.[11] "If I mentioned the circumstances," says Mr. Clarkson in an answer to a hint that he had divulged prematurely some of these arrangements, "they must have been extorted from me. I was requested to attend Mr. Beaufoy, Whitbread, Grigby, and others, who are well-wishers to the cause, but on account of the injunctions laid on me by you, I hastened out of town, that I might neither give offence by a refusal, nor yet reveal the intended plan."

Even in this early stage of deliberation, Mr. Wilberforce perceived the importance of procuring the concurrence of our foreign neighbours; and from the friendly relations which at this time subsisted with the court of Versailles, he was led to entertain the hope that France might be induced to join with Eng-

[10] An extract from a letter of Mr. Rose, of Sept. 27, 1787, highly honourable to the writer, illustrates one mode in which Mr. W. often helped forward these inquiries.

"My dear Wilberforce,

It is quite unprecedented to allow any one to rummage the Custom House papers for information, who has no employment in the revenue. I will however without delay obtain for Mr. Clarkson all the information which he wants:—though I am a West Indian planter, would I were not."

[11] Letter from Sir C. Middleton to W. Wilberforce, Dec. 19, 1787.

land in the abolition of the slave trade. In order to avail himself of every opening for promoting this arrangement he had almost determined to repair to Paris, and on the 16th of December, proposed to Mr. (afterwards Lord) Grenville to join him in the undertaking. Lord Grenville replies:

TO W. WILBERFORCE, ESQ.

"Whitehall, Dec. 18, 1787.

"My dear Wilberforce,

I would have answered your letter yesterday, but that I waited for an opportunity of speaking to Pitt upon the subject. I have seen him to-day, and talked with him upon it, and he entirely agrees with me in the opinion that no advantage could be derived from any person's undertaking a journey to Paris, for the purpose of pressing the business there. It is, I hope, unnecessary for me to say that I have the success of this matter most sincerely at heart, and am so far impressed with its importance that I most certainly would neither myself decline, nor advise you to decline, any trouble which could at all tend to promote the object. My own business would make it very inconvenient for me to undertake such an expedition at this period; but that would not be felt by me as any material obstacle, if I saw any prospect of its doing good. I think there might be some impropriety in giving rise to the many speculations which my going to Paris must occasion, without an adequate motive.

If I was there I could do no more than Eden is doing, and has in part already done. Perhaps even the appearance of our being over-solicitous upon the subject would not forward the attainment of our point, as it might give rise to a suspicion, that what we are proposing is not so perfectly fair and equal as we would wish it to be believed. These reasons apply with equal force to yourself, you could not go there without much observation, nor without running the risk of occasioning suspicions in the mind of the French ministers. And surely even if you had nothing else of any sort whatever to consult but the success of this work, you would more effectually promote it by remaining where you are attending to your own health, than if you were to endanger that, and with it the business itself, by undertaking at this season of the year a troublesome and fruitless journey to Paris.

Believe me,
my dear Wilberforce,
most truly and sincerely yours,
W. W. GRENVILLE."

Sir W^m^ Eden's correspondence shows that all was then attempted which the circumstances rendered possible, and exhibits in a very striking light the interest Mr. Pitt already took in all that concerned the abolition of the trade.

TO W. WILBERFORCE, ESQ.

"Rue Neuve des Mathurins, 19th. Dec.

"My dear Sir,

You will see what I write to Mr. Pitt, by this conveyance, respecting the African enterprise. It is in a more hopeful way than I expected; but I am never sanguine as to the success of any proposition, however just and right, which must militate against a large host of private interests. We have made some ministerial inquiries here as to its practicability, and the answers are not encouraging. We do not, nevertheless, despair of an entire success, and are satisfied at all events that much good may be done by using the present favourable moment to push the discussion and the attempt as far as we can.

"Query also, if we cannot entirely carry the whole point, (which we may as well try,) whether it would not be essentially useful to make a sort of provisional convention with France and Spain, reprobating the commerce in question in the strongest terms, and continuing it solely on a ground of necessity, under a mutual stipulation to prepare measures for abolishing it, without any convulsion to commerce and private property?—Pray discuss this paragraph with Mr. Pitt—and suggest any thing further that may occur.

I am,
my dear Sir,
ever very sincerely yours,
W^M EDEN."

A following letter held still more hopeless language, and implied too clearly the uselessness of further efforts. "I send the answer which Mons. de Montmorin gave to me yesterday respecting the negro business. He said that there were great doubts here, respecting the possibility of stopping the slave trade, without utter and sudden ruin to the French Islands. He said that it was one of those subjects upon which the *interests* of men and their *sentiments* were so much at variance that it was difficult to learn what is practicable."

His intended journey to Paris being thus laid aside, he was now established at his house in Palace Yard for the ensuing season. Though the alterations in his principles had led him to devote to higher objects the time which had of old been wasted in the frivolities of fashionable life, yet he by no means withdrew from the common intercourse of society. He began at this time a habit which he long maintained, of calling upon his different friends, on those evenings in which he was not occupied by the House of Commons' business or regular engagements. Thus he kept his hold upon society, while he reserved the morning hours for severer occupations. His intimacy with Mr. Pitt had been in no degree impaired by his adoption of a higher standard of religious practice. "They were," says one who often witnessed their familiar intercourse, "exactly like brothers." — "Dined at Pitt's," says the Diary of this date. "Called in at Pitt's at 7, for a short time; and staid supper—Apsley, Pitt, and I. Too late, par-

ticularly for Saturday — will not again." "Pitt, Bearcroft, Graham, &c. &c. dined with me." "Pitt's before House — dined." "After House to Pitt's —supped." "Jan. 29th. Burke, Sir G. Elliot, St. Andrew St. John dined with me. First not in spirits, yet a great man." To these entertainments given once each session to Mr. Burke he has often referred with satisfaction. "Parr ill-naturedly endeavoured to revive a difference which had existed between Burke and myself, in 1787. It was during the period of his violent attacks on Pitt. He had delivered a most intemperate invective against the French Navigation Treaty; a measure which was particularly welcome to many of my Yorkshire constituents. In reply to him I said, 'We can make allowance for the hon. gentleman, because we remember him in better days.' The sarcasm, though not unkindly meant, and called for, as Pitt declared in the debate, by Burke's outrageous violence, yet so exactly described the truth, that it greatly nettled him. But it soon passed over, and I had peculiar pleasure in his dinners with me, as an evidence of our perfect harmony. He was a great man—I never could understand how he grew to be at one time so entirely neglected. In part undoubtedly it was, that, like Mackintosh afterwards, he was above his audience. He had come late into parliament, and had had time to lay in vast stores of knowledge. The field from which he drew his illustrations was magnificent. Like the fabled object of the fairy's favours, whenever he opened

his mouth pearls and diamonds dropped from him."

Mr. Wilberforce's general intercourse with society was now made subservient to the interests of the Abolition cause. "Mr. Hartley, African, &c. breakfasted with me."—"Dined Sir C. Middleton's—Ramsay and Collins."—"Dined Braithwaite's—Sir P. Gibbs—Archduchesne—James Grenville—Slave Trade—Archduch. warm."—"Collins, Ramsay, Edwards, Gordons, supped—Slave Trade discussed:"—are some of his daily entries at this time. He had now given notice in the House of Commons of his intended motion on the subject for the 2nd of February, nor had the prospect of immediate success as yet been clouded over. "Do I communicate," he writes on the 25th of January to Mr. Wyvill, "or do you read with more satisfaction, that the cause of our poor Africans goes on most prosperously. I trust there is little reason to doubt of the motion for the abolition of this horrid traffic in flesh and blood being carried in parliament. But yet, for many reasons which I have not now either leisure or eyesight to state, and which therefore I must desire you, pro solito more tuo, to give me credit for, it is highly desirable that the public voice should be exerted in our support as loudly and as universally as possible. Many places and some counties have already determined on petitions to parliament, and I should be sorry that our little kingdom should be backward in its endeavours to rescue our fellow-creatures from misery, and retrieve our national character from the

foulest dishonour. I am persuaded that if a beginning is once made, the work will go on with spirit. There is no need of a county meeting, which it might be inexpedient to call at this season of the year; but district meetings might be held in different parts of the county, and the rest be effected by public advertisements. If you concur with me in opinion, remember only that no time is to be lost. I am, in haste,

ever most affectionately and faithfully yours,

W. WILBERFORCE."

"It would delight you to hear Pitt talk on this (Slave) question, but this entre nous. I mean to write a few lines to the Dean of Middleham, to acquaint him with the flourishing state of our cause: I believe he was against us in the county, but united as we are in this work, he must have forgot it—I am sure I have."

His counsels were all shared with Mr. Pitt, and long and frequent were their conferences upon the conduct of the business.—"Unwell and so did not dine at Pitt's, but met Ramsay there in the evening and discussed;" and again, "Called at Pitt's at night—he firm about African trade, though we begin to perceive more difficulties in the way than we had hoped there would be." Into these expected obstacles Mr. Pitt enters more fully in a letter of the 29th of January.

"My dear Wilberforce,

"In thinking over the difficulty respecting the African business, it has occurred to me to be very material to ascertain, whether a large proportion of the slaves now annually imported into the West Indies may not be for the purpose of bringing each year new lands into cultivation. I believe this has been a good deal the case, particularly in Dominica, St. Vincent's, and Grenada. You will see immediately the use of this proposition, if it can be made out. As far as the supply of labour which we shall put a stop to was applied to this object, we shall only prevent *further* improvements which *would have taken place,* and not break in upon the advantages at present subsisting. At all events this can apply only to a part of the importation, but it is worth knowing what proportion that is of the whole.

"The most obvious way of estimating this seems to be to get an account of the produce of each island for several years back, and also to learn from persons acquainted with the subject, what number of acres of fresh ground have been brought into cultivation, and what variations have taken place in the whole number of slaves in each island for the same period.

"I have a notion too that I have seen in some of the papers on this subject, that when our African trade was more flourishing than at present, the commodities, besides slaves, which we took from that country were in much larger quantities than at pre-

sent, particularly gold dust. That is a medium of remittance which may be carried to any extent to which the countries in Africa can supply it. It is therefore worth inquiring very particularly how this stands.

"I have treated you with a long essay,

Nil mihi rescribas, attamen ipse veni.

In other words, I find there is not a levy to-morrow. If you could contrive to come here to-night or to-morrow, I would stay another day quietly in the country, and should like extremely to have a full prose on all this business. Remember you owe me at least a week.

Ever yours,
W. P.

"Holwood,
Tuesday, Jan. 29."

"Pray write one line to let me know whether you can come, and send it to Downing Street, that the messenger may bring it to-night."

With such interest and care had Mr. Pitt already entered upon this subject, yet (the effect perhaps of constitutional reserve) to Mr. Clarkson when admitted to a personal interview [12] on Mr. W.'s introduction a month after this time, he appeared ignorant of the facts if not doubtful of the merits of the case.

The day of the promised motion was now approaching; but though his zealous partisans throughout the

[12] "In this interview," says Mr. C. "I had given birth in the minister to an interest in our cause."

country, who had formed themselves into local associations in almost all the great provincial towns, and had sent already above thirty petitions to the House of Commons, were anxious for immediate action, it became evident to the leader in the contest, that he could succeed only by more cautious tactics.

TO THE REVEREND CHRISTOPHER WYVILL.

"Feb. 8, 1788.

"My dear Sir,

The object of my delaying to reply to your letter sooner is not completely answered, for I cannot even yet inform you with precision when my motion respecting the Slave Trade will be made: there are some reasons which, according to the present appearances of things, seem to make it eligible to defer the business as long as is decent, but I do not think it can be held off for more than a fortnight or three weeks. However as my opponents will be heard by counsel going into a long examination of evidence, if ever the Bill gets into the House of Lords, . . on which head I am not altogether so void of alarm as when I last wrote to you, . . its progress will be very slow; and therefore I conceive your petition arriving in five or six weeks would come up in time to be of essential service. Would it be amiss to publish in the London as well as the provincial papers, that it is intended to take the sense of the county at the assizes? Other counties may be induced to follow the example, to whom without such a suggestion this particular mode

of collecting the public opinion in an easy manner might not occur.

I am always with the truest regard,
my dear Sir, yours affectionately,
W. WILBERFORCE."

Symptoms of determined opposition were beginning to appear. The trade had struck its roots too deeply amongst the commercial interests of the country to fall before a single blow. In spite too of Mr. Pitt's support, the administration, as a body, were not in favour of the cause. "This," says Mr. Wilberforce, "has afforded to his enemies a plausible, though certainly no just, ground for doubting his sincerity. The charge springs in part from ignorance of the practices of parliament. It is undoubtedly the established rule, that all official men are to vote with their principal; but notwithstanding the systematic support of a ministry which has resulted from systematic opposition, the minister is not considered as entitled to require the votes of the inferior members of government except on political questions. What shall, and what shall not be a government question, is not an arbitrary arrangement dependent on the part of the minister—it turns upon the question, Is the credit or stability of the ministry at stake? In the instance therefore of my motion, as on Pitt's own motion for the improvement of the Poor Laws, every one was perfectly at liberty to vote as he saw fit. It was in no sense a party question."

To meet such an opposition as was now threatened, it was absolutely necessary to possess a great body of distinct facts, upon which to ground the first attack upon the trade. To procure this evidence Mr. Pitt consented to issue a summons to the Privy Council, to examine as a board of trade the state of our commercial intercourse with Africa. "I have been blamed," says Mr. Wilberforce, "for this decision; as if I had suffered the first favourable feelings to our cause, which existed in the country, to die away, and given time for self-interest to exert its powers. But it must be borne in mind, that though I might have carried a general resolution which *condemned* the slave trade, Abolition could be obtained only by an act of parliament. Now the slow and cautious policy of our legislative system gives the opponent of every measure nine or ten, and, in the case of a warm and dexterous partisan, many more stations for drawing up his troops and resisting its advance. Of these opportunities our opponents would have availed themselves; and the inquiry into this complicated subject would have been just as long, however we had met the petitions of the West India body."

The first witnesses who were heard by the Privy Council were those whom the African merchants had deputed. They undertook to establish not only the necessity, but the absolute humanity of the trade. Meanwhile, at Mr. Wilberforce's[13] suggestion, the friends of Abolition prepared their evidence and mar-

[13] Vide Minutes of Abolition Committee, Feb. 16, 1788.

shalled their witnesses. In producing these, it had been previously determined that the London committee should alone appear, whilst the leaders of the cause should direct their movements for awhile unseen.[14]

At this important moment, it seemed but too probable that Mr. Wilberforce would be withdrawn for ever from the conduct of the cause. It was in spite of the hinderances of a delicate constitution that all his labours were performed; but in the course of this spring his health appeared entirely to fail, from an absolute decay of the digestive organs. On the last day of January he says in his Diary, after many previous records of indifferent health,—"Very unwell, so did not dine at Pitt's, but met Ramsay there in the evening and discussed—did not go to House. Feb. 1st. Still indifferent—did not go to the House." This attack passed off after a few days, and he renewed his attendance in the House, and discharged his ordinary amount of labour. But within three weeks his illness returned. "Feb. 19th. Very indifferent, great languor, total loss of appetite, flushings, &c.

"22nd. Very indifferent—feverishness very troublesome—all last night no sleep—constant thirst and heat.

"23rd. Called at Pitcairne's—worse—and uncertain kind of treatment. Never stirred out after this morning until March 1st, when Milner came by breakfast

[14] Letter from Sir C. Middleton.

time, having put off his lectures, &c. out of solicitude to see how I was going on. Appetite had entirely left me.

"March 3rd. Head utterly unfit for business all this time, and eyes indifferent. Milner left me after dinner. All my friends very kind, and Muncaster anxiety itself.

"4th. At P.'s request went to Clapham, but returned next day.

"5th. I thank God I mend—get out an airing middle of the day when fine."

On the 8th of March he writes to Mr. Wyvill, "I have been a good deal indisposed for the last fortnight, and have been kept a close prisoner, and obliged to give up even the most trifling business. Thank God, I am now recovering, and I trust a little relaxation, on which my physician peremptorily insists, and Bath waters, will restore me again to the duties of my station; my eyes have been all along, and are still, very indifferent. I approve of all you attempted to do in the slave business, but we must be satisfied with what we can obtain. I trust that question is in a prosperous state." On the very day of writing this letter his complaint returned with increased violence.

"March 27th. On the 8th had a relapse. Friends advised and forced me to call in Warren with Pitcairne. My mother and sister wrote word that they would come up, and arrived in a day or two. Confined to the house until within three or four days. Muncaster and Montagu most tenderly assiduous in watching me

during the course of my illness, and the rest of my friends universally kind."

His disorder had now assumed the character of an entire decay of all the vital functions. "There is Wilberforce," said one college friend directing the attention of another to his wasted frame, "he cannot last for three weeks." A consultation of the chief physicians of the day, ended in the declaration to his family, "That he had not stamina to last a fortnight." Judging the case to be beyond the skill of the masters of human art, they decently dismissed their patient on a journey to the Bath waters. He complied with their desire, but soberly forecasting the doubtful issue of his sickness, he first summoned Mr. Pitt, and obtained from him a promise that he would charge himself with the interests of the Abolition cause. Satisfied with this pledge he set out for Bath, which he reached upon the 5th of April in a state of extreme weakness and exhaustion. "Behold me," he wrote from Bath to Mr. Wyvill, "a banished man from London and business. It is no more than I can expect if my constituents vote my seat abdicated, and proceed to the election of another representative: however, I trust I shall yet be enabled by God's blessing to do the public and them some service. As to the Slave question, I do not like to touch on it, it is so big a one it frightens me in my present weak state. Suffice it to say, and I know the pleasure it will afford you to hear it, that I trust

matters are in a very good train. *To you in strict confidence* I will intrust, that Pitt, with a warmth of principle and friendship that have made me love him better than I ever did before, has taken on himself the management of the business, and promises to do *all* for me if I desire it, that, if I were an efficient man, it would be proper for me to do myself. This is all I can now say; I might add more were we side by side on my sofa."

Upon this promise Mr. Pitt at once acted so far as to superintend, with the help of Bishop Porteus, the Privy Council inquiries which were now in progress. Meanwhile the session of parliament was advancing, and the country adherents of the Abolition, who had sent no less than one hundred petitions to the House of Commons, began to grow impatient of delay. Some of them even wrote to suggest the propriety of immediate action under another leader. The London committee endeavoured to restrain their eagerness by suggesting to them the loss which the cause must sustain from any alteration in its conduct; and distinctly declared that "if Mr. Wilberforce was at last unable to resume his post they should leave to him the selection of his substitute." At the same time (April 11th) they wrote to Mr. Wilberforce for his directions as to their conduct "in this emergency." This communication followed him to Bath, and reached him when reduced to such a state that he could not read any letter upon business. His friends therefore

judging for him that the proper time was come, wrote in his name to Mr. Pitt,[15] and committed the cause into his hands. Upon this summons Mr. Pitt immediately acted. Upon the 22nd of April, Mr. Granville Sharpe reported to the committee that he had been sent for by the minister, and officially informed of the pledge which he had given to his friend. Upon the 9th of May accordingly Mr. Pitt moved a resolution binding the House to consider the circumstances of the slave trade early in the following session. In spite of his endeavours to prevent an unseasonable discussion, Mr. Pitt's resolution gave rise to a very warm debate; and the expressed opinion of the House seemed strongly in support of Abolition. Mr. Burke was its declared advocate; Mr. Fox had "almost made up his mind to immediate abolition." Twelve members avowed themselves its earnest supporters; and the representatives of slave-trading Liverpool were alone found bold enough to intimate dissent; yet even then were heard whispers of that commercial ruin which was soon afterwards predicted in so confident a tone. The danger of such discussions was prophetically announced, and "Mr Wilberforce for negro" affirmed to be already in the island of Grenada the secret watch-word of servile insurrection. All the friends of Abolition were warm in their expressions of sympathy in Mr. Wilberforce's illness, and in lamentation for his absence. "It is better," said Mr. Fox,

[15] The letter was written by Mrs. Wilberforce, Miss Bird, and Mr. Hawkins Brown.

"that the cause should be in his hands than in mine; from him I honestly believe that it will come with more weight, more authority, and more probability of success." But though the general question was postponed, yet an important measure of practical relief was carried during this session. "Some of our principal supporters," says Mr. Wilberforce, "one of whom was the venerable Sir. W. Dolben, were led by curiosity to inspect with their own eyes the actual state of a slave ship then fitting out in the river Thames. This was when the spring was so far advanced that the inquiry and discussion had been put off by mutual consent until the following year. But Sir W. Dolben and his friends came back to the House of Commons with a description which produced one universal feeling of pity, shame, and indignation. In particular, they found, in spite of the confidence with which it had been maintained, that self-interest alone would suffice for securing kind treatment to these wretched victims of avarice, that they were crowded into a space so miserably small, as exceedingly to aggravate their sufferings, and cause, from the spread of infectious sickness, a prodigious mortality. At once it was resolved, that such enormities should not exist unchecked even for another session, and a bill, limiting the number of slaves and providing some precautions against their sufferings, was proposed and carried by a large majority."

Sir William Dolben's Bill was introduced upon the 1st of May. The slave merchants opposed it fiercely:

The delegates of Liverpool were heard against its regulations by counsel at the bar of the House. Though within a few years they were compelled to grant that this sacrifice to humanity had actually increased their profits, they now produced witnesses to prove that the limitations of the Bill (one slave to each ton of the vessel's burden) would totally suppress the trade. After practising every manœuvre known in House of Commons tactics, and endeavouring vainly for their present purpose to raise the cry of vested interests and commercial injury, they were defeated by a large majority, and on the 10th of June the Bill was carried to the House of Lords. There it met with more threatening opposition. The Lord Chancellor Thurlow exhausted in assailing it all that fertility in objections which marked his rugged character, and the honoured name of Rodney may be found amongst its most vehement opposers. It passed the Upper House by a decided though reduced majority, and received the royal assent upon the 11th of July.

The whole course of this contest Mr. Wilberforce watched patiently at a distance. Beyond all calculation he was visibly gaining strength at Bath. His returning health was in great measure the effect of a proper use of opium, a remedy to which even Dr. Pitcairne's judgment could scarcely make him have recourse; yet it was to this medicine that he now owed his life, as well as the comparative vigour of his later years. So sparing was he always in its use, that as a stimulant he never knew its power, and as a

remedy for his specific weakness he had not to increase its quantity during the last twenty years he lived. "If I take," he would often say, "but a single glass of wine, I can feel its effect, but I never know when I have taken my dose of opium by my feelings." Its intermission was too soon perceived by the recurrence of disorder.

Just before he quitted Bath he has entered in his Journal, "My head was much weakened during my illness. I mended exceedingly during my stay. Much out airing. Never visited, but saw a good deal of company at home. Too dissipated a place, except the waters are necessary. Habits of idleness almost inseparable from it, and one grows insensibly fond of them; at least I find it so, and Warren and Pitcairne not thinking the waters wanted by me at present, I gladly in judgment, yet rather reluctantly in feeling, take my departure. The people with whom we were chiefly acquainted—Martins, Dean of Middleham, Harcourts, Milners, Mr. Whitwell, (sensible, cool, well-informed man,) Fortescues, Gambiers, &c. M. B. variable in health, excellently inclined—instances of jealousy of temper in respect of ridicule, &c. This may in part arise from her situation of dependence on her friends. Read little or nothing—some of Sully—looked into M'Laurin when in my room going to bed. Heard from Milner often while at Bath. The Leeds affair[16] partly operated towards lead-

[16] Mr. Hey, as mayor of Leeds, had endeavoured to put in execution the recommendations of the Proclamation Society: an attempt in which he had met with great opposition. Vid. Pearson's Life of Hey.

ing me to Cambridge, intending to stay a month or three weeks at St. John's—to keep early hours, temperate living, and as much reading as head, air, and exercise will allow." This intended visit is thus playfully announced to a friend at Cambridge, in a letter of the 4th of May, in the handwriting of one of his companions. "It is possible, though not very probable, that I shall be at Cambridge upon Wednesday night. Do not say so at the fire-place in the Hall, but have my quarters ready for me if you can. Beware, however, of a damp bed, and rather let me have one that has been slept in, sheets and all, for a month together. If you see Milner give him a hint of the chance of my appearance.

Yours ever,

W. WILBERFORCE."

"P. S. (In his own hand.) Miss Bird honours you with her handwriting. They are talking nonsense at the table; and the above is to create a laugh."

On the 5th of May he left Bath upon his road to Cambridge, performing the journey leisurely, sometimes upon horseback and sometimes in his carriage with his own horses. "May 7th. Through Aylesbury to Dunstable. After Tring, road extremely bad. Mounted on horseback for the first time these I know not how many months. Got a carter's horse to help the chaise up the hill. Dined at Dunstable—

determined to indict the road. Landlord at Hitchin would have had me turn a passenger out of his room —I would not consent—but by a deception he got me into it—and the passenger coming in unwittingly, proved to be T.—I asked him to supper—and afterwards a young man of Trinity Hall asked himself into our company—a forward, vulgar, and ignorant youth."

Upon the 8th of May he reached Cambridge, and after dining with Isaac Milner proceeded to St. John's Coll. where he was hospitably received by Dr. Chevalier at the Lodge. Upon the 7th of June he reviews the month which he had spent at the University. "Lived more regularly and quietly than I had done for a long time. Chiefly with Milner in the evenings. Dined commonly in Hall—Frewen—G. who I hope grows serious—Coulthurst—Bishop of Llandaff dined twice. In health mended. Quartered at the Lodge, where very comfortable. I always passed my Sundays pleasantly."

Though during this return to academic life, he experienced much gratification from the company of Milner, and some few others amongst his ordinary companions, yet his judgment of the general tone of the society he met with in his college, marks the improved standard of intellect and morals which was now before his mind. "They were not what I had expected, they had neither the solidity of judgment possessed by ordinary men of business, nor the refined feelings and elevated principles which become a

studious and sequestered life." Of himself he complains, "I am too easily contented with a general impression of religion, and do not labour to perfect faith by habituating myself to act upon a principle of love. I scarcely dare resolve, after so many defeats; but I trust I shall do better, relying entirely for success upon the assistance of that Holy Spirit which we are promised."

Leaving Cambridge he set out for Westmoreland, calling upon the road for his mother and sister. One day was spent in again examining the curiosities of Birmingham. "Saw Clays in the afternoon. Called on Dr. Priestley—Storey there—a creature of vast simplicity. Went to Soho with young Watt. (Curtis Lloyd and Watt breakfasted, who very civil and pleasing in manners.) Battle, a strong man, can raise 900lbs. in weight." On the 17th of June he reached Kendal, and after a short tour amongst the lakes, was settled in the house he had for some years rented at Rayrigg. "My dear Frewen," he wrote from Kendal, "I have been about to write to you every day since I quitted Cambridge, and have foolishly deferred it till it is almost too late to answer the main purpose of my letter, which was to desire you to put my apologies to the Bishop of Llandaff and Dr. Beadon, into the mouth of some eloquent friend. 'I went off on the sudden.' 'I was very indifferent the last day,' (which is strictly true,) &c. There scarce seems to be a necessity for employing the public orator, but if you think otherwise you will act accord-

ingly, &c. Come and try if Westmoreland will not bear a second visit.

I am ever yours affectionately,

W. WILBERFORCE."

One of his objects in this visit to the lakes, was to make Mr. Pitt acquainted with his favourite scenes. "Pitt," he says, "promises to steal down to me for a few days." This excursion, which had been planned and interrupted in the former year, was this summer also prevented by the pressure of public business. "Mr. Pitt in his way into Scotland, will take Alnwick, Castle Howard, and other principal places, but he will not make any stay except with Mr. Wilberforce."[17] "I doubt," says Mr. Smith, "your seeing Pitt in Westmoreland this year; though Winandermere would be a fine relief to him after the Westminster election, and your company the best consolation after this defeat."

But though disappointed of this visit, his house was thronged, the whole summer through, with a succession of guests. His mother, whose strength and spirits were now fast declining, had joined him on his road to Westmoreland, and she was not a little disconcerted as they passed through Bowness, on their first arrival, at being shown a carriage which bore the Gordon arms, and hearing that she must prepare for a visit from the Duchess. "July 3rd. Passing through Bowness see Duchess of Gordon's carriage, and

[17] Public Advertiser, June 20, 1787.

she and Lady Charlotte at the window before we could finish dinner." "Their tapping at our low window announced that they had discovered our retreat, and would take no denial. I went to them and told the Duchess, I cannot see you here, I have with me my old mother, who being too infirm to make new acquaintances, is no more in your way than you are in hers."[18] "Milner and I went and supped with them at Low Wood—excused not making room for them. 4th. Morning—Duchess of Gordon—walked to Rydale. Curious conversation respecting Dundas." At this time, as appears from some singular letters, which she put into Mr. Wilberforce's hands, there was a misunderstanding between the Duchess and Mr. Dundas, through whom "the rays of regal bounty" then shone in the north. This breach she wished to heal through Mr. Wilberforce's influence with Mr. Pitt. "She pressed us to go with her to Keswick, but I expect Lord Camden, who accordingly (Sat. the 5th) comes to dinner—Palmer—our religious discussion—evening—in airing. Sunday, 6th. Camden off early. 7th. Balgonies came. 10th. Muncaster came. 11th. Milner off. Monday morning, 14th. Balgonies and Muncaster off. All the past days rainy. Muncaster and I debated about trees—Balgonies' rowing—Muncaster a most warm-hearted and affectionate creature. 16th. Cookson came. 22nd. Bishop Llandaff dined and slept. 24th. Bishop off about twelve. 25th.

[18] Con. Mem.

Gen. Smith and Ricketts came—going to Scotch moors. 31st. Scott, Law, and other lawyers came. Aug. 4th. Duncombe and Mason came. Lionized Waterhead, Ulswater, &c."[19]

This constant stream of company continued until his leaving Westmoreland about the middle of September. Though diverted by its interruptions from severer studies, he turned the intercourse of social life into occasions of intellectual profit. "Here I am," says Mr. Canning in a letter of Sept. 4th, 1814, "on Winandermere lake, not far from the inn at Bowness, where in old time, I am told, you used to read aloud all night, to the great disturbance of the then landlady and her family." His deeper principles gave him too a keener relish for the natural beauties around him. "I never enjoyed the country more than during this visit, when in the early morning I used to row out alone, and find an oratory under one of the woody islands in the middle of the lake." Attempts at active usefulness also were not wholly neglected. "Sadly taken up," he says, "on Sundays with company in the house. Flemings, and Grantley, and Nortons, and Lord Lonsdale called. Sunday-school first meeting." Yet upon the whole, his plans of study and retirement were materially disturbed.

"The life I am now leading," he enters in his private Journal at the end of July, "is unfavourable in all respects, both to mind and body, as little suit-

[19] Diary.

able to me considered as an invalid, under all the peculiar circumstances of my situation, as it is becoming my character and profession as a Christian. Indolence and intemperance are its capital features. It is true, the incessant intrusion of fresh visitors, and the constant temptations to which I am liable, from being always in company, render it extremely difficult to adhere to any plan of study, or any resolutions of abstemiousness, which last too it is the harder for me to observe, because my health requires throughout an indulgent regimen. Nothing however can excuse or palliate such conduct, and with the sincerest conviction of its guilt, I pray to that gracious God whose ways are not as our ways, to have mercy upon me, to turn the current of my affections, to impress my mind with an awful and abiding sense of that eternity which awaits me, and finally to guide my feet into the way of peace. And though I have so often resolved and broken my resolutions, that I am almost ready to acquiesce in the headlong course which I am following; yet as thus to acquiesce would be to consign myself to irreversible misery, I must still strive to loose myself from this bondage of sin and Satan, calling on the name of the Lord, who alone can make my endeavours effectual.

"I am this week entering on a scene of great temptation,—a perpetual round of dissipation and my house overflowing with guests; it is the more necessary for me to live by the faith of the Son of God. Do Thou then, Thou blessed Saviour and Friend of sinners, hear

and have mercy on me. Let Thy strength be magnified in my weakness. But whatever be the issue of this residence at Rayrigg, may it be a useful lesson to teach me to form my plans hereafter with greater caution and circumspection, and not to run myself into temptations, from the evil of which he who voluntarily exposes himself to them cannot reasonably expect to be delivered.

"I will now form and note in my pocket-book such resolutions for this week's regulation, as are best adapted to my present circumstances; and do Thou, O God, enable me to keep them. My general object, during my stay at this place, should be to guard against habits of idleness, luxury, selfishness, and forgetfulness of God, by interlacing as much as I can of reading, and meditation, and religious retirement, and self-examination. Let me constantly view myself in all my various relations

as one who professes to be a Christian,
as a member of parliament,
as gifted by nature and fortune, as a son, brother, paterfamilias, friend, with influence and powerful connexions.

"1. To be for the ensuing week moderate at table.

"2. Hours as early as can contrive. Redeeming the time."

As he was not now contented with empty resolutions of amendment, he determined upon having more command over the disposal of his time, by giving up this favourite residence. "Milner and I had much

talk about this being a most improper place for me, and resolved upon not continuing the house."

"This place," he wrote to Mr. Newton, just before he quitted Westmoreland, "wherein I looked this summer for much solitude and quiet, has proved very different from retirement. The tour to the lakes has become so fashionable, that the banks of the Thames are scarcely more public than those of Windermere. You little knew what you were doing when you wished yourself with me in Westmoreland. My experience will not, I hope, be wasted on me, and I shall lay my plans in future with more foresight and circumspection. At this moment my cottage overflows with guests." He gave up the house, when his lease determined, in the following spring.

Throughout this time, the operations of the London Committee for procuring the Abolition of the Slave Trade were directed by his advice. At the close of the session, the inquiries of the Privy Council were suspended for the summer, and the friends of Abolition were employed in keeping alive the general interest of the country, and gaining a larger mass of evidence for future use. To effect these purposes they resolved to institute corresponding committees, and to hold a public meeting in the metropolis. Of these resolutions, they were persuaded by Mr. Wilberforce's arguments to modify the first, and rescind the second.[20] He desired to appeal to the moral feelings of the nation, and approved therefore of promoting petitions to par-

[20] MS. Proceedings of the Committee.

liament; but he distrusted and disowned the questionable strength which might be gained by systematic agitation. He concurred in their despatching Mr. Clarkson on a journey through the provinces, to seek witnesses who, with some that he had found himself, might be examined by the Privy Council. It was of great moment to gain as much support as possible in the following session; and to secure the influence of Lord Lonsdale (the exact number of whose subject votes is recorded in his homely soubriquet of the Premier's Cat-o'-nine-tails) was of the first importance. With a view to this object, he himself resolved to visit Lowther castle before he quitted Westmoreland. "I cannot but too well remember," writes Lord Muncaster two years afterwards, "the stolen expedition when you were last at Rayrigg, in which, no doubt, you had a thousand frights and apprehensions, besides those of conscience; and a few qualms perhaps personally with regard to myself, when you crept over the hills to plead the cause of freedom before the hardened despot of the north." "Resolved," says the Diary of Sept. 11th, "to go to Lord Lonsdale's (Slave Trade business)—Sir J. Graham, Garforth, Saul, Fielding, Jno. Lowther, and two or three more—we all commend—the terrace—John Lord Lonsdale." The success of this embassy he has not recorded; but it brought at least before him, in "the despot of the north," surrounded by his dependent senators, a singular and now extinguished phase of social life. It is difficult to regard without

a smile the visible amazement of the domestic band at the unwonted courtesy which was extended to the independent guest.[21] Nor less unfeigned was his own astonishment when, upon leaving his room for an early departure, he discovered that the footsteps he had long heard pacing the corridor were those of a brother senator, who (commanded by their host) had thus prematurely risen to persuade him to a longer stay.

After paying Hull a short visit, and spending a day at Buckden, he set off for Bath. "Sat. 4th Oct. Off early; spring broke near Buckden; walked forward, called in at Job William's cottage, a brick-maker, four children, seems a very sober, industrious, well-disposed man. Dr. Cleaver's living, of whom he spoke well. Arrived late at Burford where I spent the Sunday, Oct. 5; sermon on the Nature of Angels, a most unprofitable discourse. A Sunday spent in solitude spreads and extends its fragrance; may I long find the good effects of this." There had been a time when to be thrown thus upon his own resources had been a severe trial to his spirits. "I scarce ever felt," he has said, "such wretchedness as during those days which I spent by myself before my reader joined me at Rayrigg, in 1784. My eyes were so bad that I could not read; the rain would not let me leave the house, and I had not a creature with whom to converse: I stood resting my forehead on the chimney-piece in a state of weariness not to be described." But now he had

[21] By Lord Lonsdale's ordinary rule cold tea was good enough for late comers.

learned to "commune with his own heart and to be still;" he had drunk into that "free spirit" by which alone such self-converse can be happily maintained.

"Monday, Oct. 6th. Breakfasted at Lord Bathurst's, and drove with him through his woods. Bath evening, no lodgings provided, so housed at the Bear.—Lord Maitland and Todd—the latter talked of a paralytic stroke; alas! with how little true seriousness; nor did I express any deeper sense of the awfulness of the warning. Poor C.'s unhappy end. Milner's excellent advice at Hull, in addition to his lecture at Rayrigg, de levitate—'Nihil enim per se amplum est, nisi in quo judicii ratio extat'—of being a man of business, &c. May God enable me to profit from his hint, and make me properly grateful to him for this true proof of friendship. Resolved not to dine out, with a view to obtaining more leisure. Tuesday, 7th. Began the waters."

He was not able to continue long at Bath. "I have for some time deferred," writes Mr. Wyvill,[22] "mentioning to you the intended jubilee at York upon the 5th of November. But it is now so near, that I can no longer delay to communicate my opinion that your appearance at so great a meeting of your friends as will then be held at York is absolutely necessary, so that nothing short of inability to move without endangering your health ought to prevent it.

"Your absence from this meeting would be peculiarly prejudicial, because many would be apt to consider it

[22] Oct. 4.

a proof of excessive scrupulosity. On this topic your antagonists have not been wanting in their endeavours to hurt you; but if you embrace this opportunity of meeting your constituents, and show them you are exactly the same person whose cause they lately espoused with so much zeal, these hostile attempts will be unsuccessful. It is surely possible to mix in such assemblies with innocence and decency."

"Were I to attempt," he answers, "to show my constituents this, it would be an attempt to impose upon them which nothing should induce me to practise, and which I am sure you would be the last man in the world to recommend. Except in the personal regard and gratitude to my friends, which were then so strong that I dare not say they are increased, I cannot, (I speak to you what addressed to another would be arrogant, but what in speaking to you it would be worse than affectation to withhold,) I cannot say that I am by any means the same person. I can assert with truth that I have a higher sense of the duties of my station, and a firmer resolution to discharge them with fidelity and zeal; but it is also true that I am under many restraints as to my conduct to which I was not then subject, and that my religious opinions are very different. Not that I would shut myself up from mankind and immure myself in a cloister. My walk I am sensible is a public one; my business is in the world; and I must mix in assemblies of men, or quit the post which Providence seems to have assigned me. I entirely agree with you, 'one

may mix in these assemblies with decency and innocence.' But the point is, whether by confining myself within these limits I should be likely to advance my interests with my constituents. They certainly, I trust, will not believe that I am so over-rigid as to condemn the cheerfulness of the social board, when kept within the bounds of sobriety and decency, however diligently my enemies may circulate reports to my disadvantage; but this would not be enough to remove the impression in question, if it were acting honestly to endeavour to remove it. No! for this purpose would it not be requisite for me to drink, and sing, &c. as I used to do? You being a clergyman cannot draw any inferences from your own case to mine; nothing of the sort I object to is expected from you."

He deemed it however right to obey the summons. "27th of October. Left Bath for London on my way to York to attend the jubilee—Whilst at Bath grew much better."

"28th. Arrived in town, and dined at Pitt's—Bed at Sir C. Middleton's—not a wink of sleep all night."

"29th. Saw my aunt in a truly happy state of mind."

"30th. Went to Holwood—Pitt and Grenville—discussed slave trade."

The examination by the Lords of Trade was now about to recommence; and it continued, with the exception of a short interruption in November, caused by the illness of the King, till the month of April 1789.

"31st. To town, and in afternoon on to Stevenage."

"Nov. 3rd. On to Dick Milnes'—where dined and slept—she a pleasing woman, had long thought of slaves."

"4th. On to York—dined Morritt's—Duncombe—Mason—Burgh."

"5th. Jubilee day—dined Tavern—and ball at night, our enemy grandees there."

"6th. Off in the evening to Tadcaster."

"8th. Travelled on, aiming at Gisborne's, but obliged to stop short."

"Monday, 10th. On to Gisborne's, where staid all day."

"11th. On to Lichfield, where first heard a confused account of the King's illness. On to Birmingham, where stopped all day for intelligence. Off next afternoon after much debating. Sir John Smith's account.—Wednesday, to Worcester.—Thursday, to Petty France—heard all along that the King dying.—Friday, 14th. To Bath—found letters—obliged to go to town to parliament, which on account of King's illness cannot be prorogued." "My dear Wilberforce," wrote Mr. Steele from Downing Street, "the accounts of this day are prodigiously favourable. . . The King slept a good deal in the course of yesterday, and was much more composed and calm when he was awake. The physicians do not hesitate to say that there is a visible alteration for the better, and his recovery seems to be now much more probable than any body ventured to suppose it to be some days ago. I am at all times sanguine, and seldom give way to despond-

ence till the case is desperate; but on the present occasion I cannot persuade myself to doubt but that there is a protecting hand stretched forth over him and his country, and that every thing will still be as we wish it.

Yours ever most sincerely.

"P. S. It is very desirable that you should be in town on Thursday, unless it materially interferes with your health."

"Left Bath, Monday, 17th, and reached London 18th. Parliament met on Thursday, 20th, and adjourned for a fortnight; resolved to return to Bath—Set off 21st, and reached my sister and Miss More with her, Sat. 22nd—staid there till Tuesday, Dec. 2nd.—Miss More a most excellent woman. Reached London, Wednesday, Dec. 3rd, and attended cock-pit at night. Dec. 4th. Parliament met, and adjourned to Monday, Dec. 8th, when physicians' committee appointed." His health was now so far re-established that he was able to attend steadily to business, and render Mr. Pitt the hearty assistance which the trying situation of affairs needed. "Dec. 9th and 10th. Attended committee and made our report. 11th. Precedent committee, and reported."

All independent men throughout the country looked forward with alarm to the issue of the present crisis. "I very much fear," wrote Major Cartwright to Mr. Wilberforce, (Dec. 1st,) "that the King's

present derangement is likely to produce other derangements not for the public benefit. I hope we are not to be sold to the coalition faction." "Mr. Fox," writes Mr. Wyvill, "is I see arrived, and cabal I doubt not is labouring with redoubled zeal under his direction to overturn the present government, while you and the other firm friends of Mr Pitt are making equal exertions to prevent a change of men and measures. I think the general opinion is, that the Prince has acted like a rash young man, that he is capable of being led into dangerous measures, and that men whom the nation greatly distrusts, have all his confidence and esteem."

Throughout this trying time, Mr. Wilberforce's sentiments exactly coincided with those of that great man whose promptitude and courage were then subjected to so severe a trial. "In the midst of all these disquieting circumstances," he wrote, "my friend is every day matter of fresh and growing admiration. I wish you were as constantly as I am witness to that simple and earnest regard for the public welfare, by which he is so uniformly actuated; great as I know is your attachment to him, you would love him more and more." [23]

[23] To the Rev. C. Wyvill.

CHAPTER VII.

DECEMBER 1788 TO JULY 1790.

Serious resolutions—Increased diligence—Wilberforce prepares to move for the Abolition—Pitt's co-operation—Stephen—Retirement at Teston—Motion lost—Hope of furthering the cause at Paris—Mr. Clarkson sent there, but without success—Visit to H. More—Chedder—Schools commenced—Buxton—Country visits—Return to town—Life in Palace Yard during the session of Parliament—Test Act—Examinations before Slave Trade committee—Crowther—General election.

THE year 1788 closed upon Mr. Wilberforce with the death of that aunt, under whose roof had been passed so large a portion of his early years.

"Tuesday, Dec. 23rd. Dined at Montagu's, Shooter's Hill—tête-à-tête with him and his sweet wife—excellently disposed people. Wednesday. Called at Blackheath—saw my aunt, whispered that she was comfortable. Oh that I may die the death of the righteous! Returned to Montagu's, and there all day. M. took me to task for peculiarities—saying grace, &c.

"25th, Christmas day. Not being well, and honestly thinking I might do them good, and that therefore it was my duty, staid at Shooter's Hill all day. Church

at Eltham — and sudden opportunity of receiving the sacrament—serious conversation in the evening. Both Mr. and Mrs. M. excellently disposed. May God bless them, and make them happy here and hereafter.

"Friday, 26th. Called at Blackheath, and saw my aunt for the last time—she sensible—too weak to talk, but expressed her inward satisfaction and composure. Oh may God enable me to have as firm grounds of confidence in those awful moments! Came on to town and dined at Pitt's.

"Saturday, 27th. My aunt died at ten o'clock."

The scene which he had now been witnessing tended no doubt to deepen those serious impressions which mark the first entries of the new year. "Received the sacrament. Thought over my future plan of conduct and resolutions. I resolve to endeavour henceforth to live more to the glory of God, and the good of my fellow-creatures—to live more by rule, as in the presence of him by whom I shall finally be judged. For the ensuing week I resolve to begin the day with meditation or reading Scripture —to pray thrice—constant self-examination—table rules—Horneck's rules—and my other rules—an account of time also."[1]

To one whose past habits and present occupations were of a desultory character, few things would be more useful, or more difficult, than to note down accurately the mode in which his time was spent.

[1] Journal.

Such an account he now commenced, and continued resolutely until his studious habits were matured; and if in after-life he perceived any relaxation in his diligence he immediately resumed the practice. His mode of keeping this reckoning with himself is shown in the following weekly tables copied from his Diary; the one during his attendance upon the House of Commons, the other at a season of retirement in the country. It was his continual complaint, "that my infirm health makes so much sleep absolutely essential to me."

	Major application. Study.	Minor application. Study.	Requisite company, &c. Visits, &c.	Unaccounted for, &c. Dressing.	Relaxation sub caus.	Squandered.	Serious reading, and meditation.	Bed.	Total.	House of Commons, business, &c. Left out of plan.
Jan. 26th.		5¾	1¾	1¼	¼	½	1½	8½	24	4½
— 27th.			1	½	¼	2¼	1	8½	24½	11
— 28th.			8	¾			½	9¼	24	5½
— 29th.			5½	¼		1	¾	8¼	23½*	7½
— 30th.			8	1			¾	7¾	24	6½
— 31st.			7	½	¼	3¼	¾	9¼	25	3¾
Sunday Feb. 1st.			4½	1	¼		8½	8½	22½	
— 2nd.			3¾	½	¼	2¼	¾	8¼	24¾	8½
— 3rd.			4½	¼			¾	9	23¾	9¼
— 4th.			8¼	1¼			¾	8	24	5¼

* This should be 23¼, but the numbers are retained which stand in the Diary. Another error occurs below.

April.	Major application.	Minor application.	Meals, relaxation, &c.	Dressing, and undressing.	Squandered.	Serious reading, &c.	Necessary company.	Bed.	Total.
Thursday 9th.	7¾	1¼	4¾	¾	—	1	—	8¾	24¼
Good Friday, 10th.	5¾		4½	¼		4¼		8¾	24
— 11th.	9¼	—	5¾	¾	—	1		8	24¾
Easter Sunday, 12th.	3½		4⅜	1	¼	5¾	¼	7	22¼
— 13th.	9¾		6	¼		1¼		7¾	25
— 14th.	8¼		5½	¾		¾		7¾	23
— 15th.	10	—	6¼	¼	—	¼	—	9	26¼

Some notes inserted in his Diary when entering on the plan illustrate these tables. "How long, alas, have I been a cumberer of the ground! how little have I availed myself of the opportunities of usefulness, which have been so abundantly afforded me! Be more diligent and watchful for the future—the night cometh when no man can work. Let this consideration quicken my exertions. I am about to enter upon keeping a regular account of my time, from which it will be in my power to derive many advantages. My health requires me to live indulgently in all respects; my station and sphere of action call me much into company. Let me deal faithfully with myself, and not give way further or more frequently than really shall be necessary, but strive to redeem the time as one who works for eternity. Bless this work, O God, I beseech thee.—Gross account

of time . . N. B. Never to harass myself or spend the present time, in considering needlessly under what head to enter any portion of what is past. . . Squandered—waste or misappropriation—all unnecessary meals, or bed time. House of Commons, business, &c.: into this is brought all time spent in going to and from public offices—letters of business—reading for business—consulting, &c. Relaxation suâ causâ —here meal times when alone or quite at liberty, &c.: the more this head can be reduced the better. Dressing, &c.—all that is frittered away—all which I forget how to account for. Requisite company—going from place to place—waiting for people. Minor application—study—reading for entertainment, or with no great attention—familiar common letters, &c. Major application—study—reading for use—composing—getting by heart. Serious—private and family devotions, &c. Remember my rules and hints respecting the employment of odd half hours, and of thoughts in company or alone, riding, walking, providing store of thoughts, &c. &c.—"

Thus careful was he at this period of his life, to use the lively emotions of religious feeling with which it naturally abounded, in forming settled habits of obedience. To "live by rule," was now his object; nor was it only over the employment of his time that he thus diligently watched. To those who knew the clear serenity of his later life, it may be matter of surprise to hear that his sky was ever overcast by storms. It is a most encouraging reflection that this

peace was the result of previous contests. For though at this time most strictly temperate, and inclined in the judgment of his fellows to abstemiousness rather than excess, he was himself sensible of many struggles before his body was brought under that "sober government" which renders it the meetest instrument of the renewed spirit. He was not labouring to reduce intemperate habits within the limits of that self-indulgent propriety which contents the generality of men. From this point he started, but aiming at a higher standard, he sought to live a life of mortification in the midst of luxury. It was his object to gain such control over his lower nature, that it should never impede his usefulness in social intercourse, or clog the freedom of his communings with God. His Diary affords many instances of these contentions with himself, upon which he entered not without some indignation[2] at discovering their necessity.—"Surely these are not little things, health depends upon them, and duty on health."—"They are not little things if my health and power of serving God be a great one." Perceiving that his difficulties arose from carelessness as much as self-indulgence, he sought to counteract it by laying down a set of rules too minutely practical to bear insertion here, while not content with recording against himself every infraction of these severe regulations, he had

[2] "Itaque freni gutturis temperatâ relaxione et constrictione tenendi sunt. Et quis est, Domine, qui non rapiatur aliquando extra metam necessitatis? Quisquis est magnus est. Magnificet nomen tuum—Ego autem non sum quia peccator homo sum." S. Aug. Confess. lib. x. c. 31.

recourse to another expedient to keep his vigilance awake.—"M. and I made an agreement to pay a guinea forfeit when we broke our rules, and not to tell particulars to each other. I hope this will be an instrument under divine grace to keep me from excess. When once a settled habit is formed less rigid rules will be necessary."—"Exceeded, and determined to pay forfeit.—Went on rather better, yet by no means up to the strictness of my plan."—"I have lately been ill, and by the mercy of God have recovered; yet instead of devoting my renewed strength to him, I am wasting it, particularly by exceeding my rules. I re-resolve, humbly imploring pardon for Christ's sake. Considering my constitution, resolutions, and opinions, how far am I from perfect temperance. This brings on unfitness for communion with God; averseness from him; alienated affections; a body unequal to business; an antinomian and self-righteous spirit, too easily forgiving myself for the past, and looking for comfort to better performances in future. I am hurt and ashamed at myself; yet looking to God for strength, I resolve through him to amend; and, as the only way of being safe, (licitis perimus,) to adhere to my strict rules. May this have an effect in other things."—"Nothing is to be resisted more than the disposition which we feel when we have been long striving unsuccessfully for any particular grace or against any habitual infirmity, to acquiesce in our low measure of that grace, or in the presence of that infirmity, so as not to feel shame,

humiliation, and compunction. We are not to cast off the hope of getting better of the one and attaining to the other. This is the very state in which we are to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. The promise is sure in the end. Therefore though it tarry wait for it; it will surely come, it will not tarry." With these resolutions and in this frame of mind he entered upon the year 1789.

"Jan. 1st, Thursday. I hope to spend this year better than the preceding. Eliot breakfasted with me, and I went with him to the Lock—received the sacrament. Dined at home. Thought over future plan of conduct. Called at Pitt's. Last night the Speaker put off the House by a note in Warren's hand-writing, after he had sent word he had passed a good night—we suspect a trick.

"Jan. 2nd. My aunt's funeral. Intensely cold. Staid in the carriage on account of the frost and snow whilst the service was performed. Dined at Lord Chatham's—Lady C. and B.—the latter opens in private. Lord Grantley died yesterday; and Cornwall the Speaker, after a very short illness, this morning. 'We had laughed at his indisposition the day before, deeming it political, and thinking him '*be-Warrened.*' How much more likely for life was he than I! yet am I spared and allowed further time for repentance.

"5th. House—chose Grenville Speaker, Sir Gilbert Elliot being opposed, 215 to 144. Dined Lord Camden's — Bayham and Lady B. there. Afterwards

called at Duchess of Gordon's: where an assembly grew on me.

"6th. Very much shattered. Committee named for examining physicians—thought of going to business . . restrictions . . but at Vince's motion committee chosen. Evening made calls.

"7th. Committee morning—sat till half-past five. Dined Pitt's: then friends at home till late.

"8th. Committee till after five. Dined at home—Scott, Muncaster, &c.: then committee till past one. Pitt and Dundas till three.

"9th and 10th. Committee as before.

"Sunday, 11th. Very indifferent from late sitting—dreadfully severe weather all this time. Dined at Addington's—serious talk with him.

"15th. A charming morning. Yesterday the frost broke up. The river had been frozen over below the bridge—booths. Had an idea of going into the country to Montagu's. Would not go to Dundas's with Pitt because a large party, and I thought I might infringe my rules and be kept up late—and next day a great day in the House; so resolved to dine at home with Muncaster for the sake of reading the Report together immediately after dinner.

"17th. Dined Bishop of Salisbury's—then called Duchess of Gordon's, and Pitt's, where staid too late; but could not well get away—discussing with Dundas and Rose the Household business.

"18th. Sunday. Weak in the morning. Called at Pitt's and advised him to reconsider the Household

business. Went to Cripplegate church to hear Gregory the Bishop of London's protégé for the Asylum—elegant, serious, and devotional, but sadly obscure in his views. Then obliged to disturb my head with politics. Called on Pitt—he gone out, and the conference over. They say they have decided to stand their ground respecting the Household—I am much hurt at the intelligence. Late hours bring many evils with them. If I dine out I can seldom do any material business after dinner. Earlier hours therefore from this time.

"19th. Wasted part of the morning at Pitt's. Spoke at night—Household Restrictions. Agreeably disappointed in the division, and general impression. Muncaster, Montagu, Scott, Villiers, Bayham, home with me."

"I was rejoiced," writes Sir R. Hill, on the following day, "to hear you speak in so animated a manner in your reply to Mr. Fox. The unreasonable conduct of opposition in the late resolutions outdoes *if possible* all their former effrontery. They would make two kings, instead of a regent and a king."

"21st. At dinner, and all night, till very late—Pitt, Mulgrave, Ryder, &c.—too dissipated.

"22nd. At Shooter's Hill. Resolved to go with Mulgrave in the morning. Montagu and his wife gave me excellent advice. God bless them.

"24th. Called Duchess of Gordon's, and long discussion about Prince of Wales, &c.

"25th, Sunday. Heard Mr. Woodd—with Eliot.

Blessed be God, who hath appointed these solemn returns of the day of rest to remind us of those most important realities, of which we grow forgetful amidst the hurry of business and the vanities of the world."

It was not merely the ordinary occupations of society and the House of Commons by which his attention was now engaged. His thoughts were more and more engrossed by his great object. "House," he says on the 26th of January, "till near six—slave business all the evening, with only biscuit and wine and water—nervous in the night, and dreamed about slavery, without referring it to blacks." From this time it occupies a leading place amongst the entries of his Diary. "28th. Slave business, Hawkins Brown's.—31st. Mr. Stephen breakfasted—slave business." He was still actively engaged in obtaining authentic information as to all the particulars of the trade, and the general state of West Indian manners. From no one did he receive more important information, than from the last-mentioned friend, the late James Stephen. Mr. Stephen was just returned from a long residence in the West Indies; and added to an ardent zeal in support of abolition, a minute acquaintance with the whole subject. Intending shortly to return to the West Indian bar, and with a large family entirely dependent upon his professional exertions, Mr. Stephen, as bold a man as ever faced danger, thought himself obliged by duty to withhold the public avowal of his sentiments. But his generous

spirit burned indignantly within him at the misery he daily witnessed; and throughout an eleven years' residence in those colonies, he maintained the resolution, which a dread of the debasing influence of the system had at first suggested, and would never be the owner of a slave. During this visit to England, and by letter from St. Kitt's until he came forward amongst the ablest advocates for abolition, he communicated freely with Mr. Wilberforce. Official intercourse between them soon ripened into personal attachment, cemented afterwards by a family alliance, and never interrupted until Mr. Stephen's death at Bath almost in the presence of his friend, a few months before his own decease. "Animus vero non illum deserens, sed respectans, in ea profecto loca discessit quo illi ipsi cernebat esse veniendum."

Mr. Wilberforce's time was now continually occupied. "Feb. 3rd. Tuesday. Morning Dr. Glasse and sub-committee (of Reformation of Manners Society) to breakfast—then all went to Montagu house, where a full meeting—did business—calls. Wednesday. Indifferent. Ramsay came to breakfast, and with me all morning. Dined Bishop of Lincoln's. Pitt's business. Thursday. Wood breakfasted with me—on business. Then Magdalen admission day. Dined at Mrs. Montagu's. How humiliating it is to attend the Magdalen! Sunday. Eliot and Henry Thornton. Lock—Scott excellent on St. James v. 7, 8. Much affected with the discourse. Oh blessed be God who hath appointed the sabbath, and interposes these

seasons of serious recollection. May they be effectual to their purpose; may my errors be corrected, my desires sanctified, and my whole soul quickened and animated in the Christian course.—The last week has been spent little, if at all, better than the preceding; but I trust God will enable me to turn to Him in righteousness. Write, I beseech Thee, Thy law in my heart, that I may not sin against Thee. I often waste my precious hours for want of having settled beforehand to what studies to betake myself, what books to read. Let me attend to this for the time to come, and may my slave business, and my society business, be duly attended to.

"Feb. 9th. Went to Pitt's to talk on slave trade. King much better—thank God.

"10th. Meeting of sub-committee at Bishop of Salisbury's, till two. Calls. Dined at Pitt's before the House.

"13th. Strange talk with the Bishop of Llandaff this morning about infinites, &c. All this time very indifferent in health.

"14th. Opposition sadly embarrassed whether to accept or not. Sixty-eight Major-Generals—four Field-Marshals—vacant. Bishoprics—Justice in Eyre, &c. Dined Pitt's and sat with him. Morning at Kew. Willis's—much talk. King greatly better.

"15th. Sunday. Morning Lock—Scott—Eliot much affected. Called Gordon's, who ill—in pain, &c. Much affected all day with a sense of heavenly things. Westminster Abbey in the afternoon. Once

more I thank God for the intervention of the sabbath, and I pray that I may be enabled to make a due use of it.

" 17th. Morning Eliot, slave business. King declared by report to be *convalescent*. Pitt doubtful what to do. Called Lord Camden's and Pitt's. Evening kept late.

" 18th. Stephen and Eliot—breakfasted. Ditto evening—slave business till near bed, and slept ill, as I commonly do when my mind is occupied before bed-time—nervous, and tossing, haunted by thoughts about trifles.

" 19th. Dined at Thellusson's—large party—how frivolous and foolish the conversation! But how little was I spiritually-minded, or faithful in endeavouring to improve it or my time! I am conformed to this world—I must change. After Thellusson's, called Pitt's and Duchess of Gordon's. Home early.

" 20th. Lords had stopped the Regency Bill the night before, and Thurlow with the King for two hours this morning. Pepper Arden's christening—Bishop of London—Pitt, &c. Christening indecent after dinner in such a circle—kept late there—off to Pitt's. How vain and foolish all the conversation of great dinners! nothing worth remembering.

" 21st. Morning slave business—Eliot. Dined at home—large party.

" 23rd. Off to Kew with Milner on his business. Prince of Wales and Duke of York saw the King for the first time—King bore it well. Dined at Smelt's

with the Montagus and old Willis: then called at the House again. Tom Willis about Pitt's going to see the King betimes. Sent to Pitt to be early.

"24th. I called on John Wesley—a fine old fellow. The bustle and hurry of life sadly distract and destroy me. Alas, alas, I must mend; may God enable me.

"25th. Sub-committee—Bishop of Salisbury's. Dined at Lord Salisbury's—large party—nothing in conversation worth remembering. Pitt showed me the King's excellent letter—long conversation, in which he inquired after every body. On full conviction from experience that it is impossible for me to make myself master of the slave subject, and to go through my other various occupations, except I live more undistractedly, I determine scarce ever to dine out in parties, and in all respects to live with a view to these great matters, till the slave business is brought to some conclusion. May God bless the work and my endeavours. My health very indifferent. Milner at Kew—he comes in and gives me the extraordinary account—all surprise and astonishment. Bulletin, 'Free from complaint.' Walked to the Observatory and back. There Milner saw him—and at night in the circle.

"26th. Slave committee breakfasted with me—then out—calls, &c. House—business went off, no questions asked. Dined at home—Milner and I had some serious talk.

"March 1st. Sunday. Eliot breakfasted and Lock

—Scott. Called Lord Chatham's about politics (a work of real necessity). Strongly and deeply affected by an examination of myself, I would hope to good purpose, and resolved to change my habits of life. This perpetual hurry of business and company ruins me in soul if not in body. I must make a thorough reform. More solitude and earlier hours—diligence—proper distribution and husbandry of time—associating with religious friends; this will strengthen my weakness by the blessing of God." "On an impartial examination of my state, I see that the world is my snare; business and company distract my mind, and dissipate those serious reflections which alone can preserve us from infection in such a situation of life as mine, where these antidotes are ever wanted to prevent our falling victims to this mortal contagion. My error hitherto has been, I think, endeavouring to amend this and the other failing, instead of striking at the root of the evil. Let me therefore make a spirited effort, not trusting in myself, but in the strength of the Lord God. Let me labour to live a life of faith, and prayer, and humility, and self-denial, and heavenly-mindedness, and sobriety, and diligence. Let me labour this week in particular, and lay down for myself a course of conduct. Yet let not this be mainly on my mind, but the fear and love of my Maker and Redeemer. Oh that the blessed day may come, when in the words of St. Paul, I may assert of myself that my conversation is in heaven; that the life I now lead in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me

and gave Himself for me!" "I trust I can say in the presence of God that I do right in going into company, keeping up my connexions, &c. Yet as it is clear from a thorough examination of myself that I require more solitude than I have had of late, let me henceforth enter upon a new system throughout. Rules—As much solitude and sequestration as are compatible with duty. Early hours night and morning. Abstinence as far as health will permit. Regulation of employments for particular times. Prayer three times a day at least, and begin with serious reading or contemplation. Self-denial in little things. Slave trade my main business now.[3]

"Monday, March 2nd. Evening—Eliot, slaves—asked four or five friends to dine before House, meaning it to be an hour's dinner; when House up and they staid with me till half past eight. Eliot staid and we looked at slave business.

"3rd. Montagu by gentle compulsion forced me to dine with him—Pitt and Mrs. Montagu.

"4th. Very unwell—kept the house all day—slave business, Eliot.

"5th. Kept the house all day. Pitt gave notice in the House for message.

"6th. Frewen and Clarkson at dinner—Jonas Brown, Muncaster, and Eliot at night—slave business, but interrupted often and much by people on other matters, which sadly obstruct my progress.

"8th, Sunday. I did not think it prudent to go to

[3] Diary.

church, so within all day—Bates and Frewen. I made it too little of a Lord's day; it is better to spend it chiefly alone, for one at least so much in company as myself; yet I resolve to amend. Alas, my sluggish spirit grovels in the carnal enjoyments, and my deceitful heart loses itself in the vain pursuits, of the world. Do Thou, O God, quicken me by Thy blessed Spirit. Bring home the wanderer. Fix my misplaced affections on Thee. Oh *strive* to enter in at the strait gate.

"9th. I set out with a languid mind but serious. Romilly asked himself to dine with me. Ramsay and Anstey. I too much set upon earthly things. Ramsay came to stay with me. How active and diligent he is!

"10th. Forced out to breakfast at Bishop of London's. Eliot, slaves. Message and address on King's resumption. Returned home. Trifled with Lord Stanhope, Thurlow, &c. Then slave business. Illuminations.

"12th. Morning to Pitt's on business. Then slave trade. Dined Bayham's. Slave business evening. Lord C. condemned slave business.

"14th. Slave business at home. Dined General Harcourt's—Pitt—Mrs. Johnson, &c. Frewen arrived. Express to inform him of the master's death. I went about to canvass for him; Gisborne's, &c. A hasty word between *us* about Frewen. Kept up late by this business.

"15th. Called Bishop of Gloucester's about Frewen.

"16th. Very busy all this morning one way or other. Dined at Pitt's. Called at Bishop of Gloucester's about Frewen's business.

"17th. A very hurrying morning. Evening, having made a thoughtless engagement to do so, went with Pitt, Eliot, and Addington, to Holwood. Grounds covered with snow.

"18th. Serious discussion with Pitt. Wintry face of things. Much hurried after coming to town with Frewen's and other business, so declined going to Duchess of Gordon's.

"19th. Very busy all morning. Ramsay and Clarkson.

"20th. Went to Holwood with Pitt, and there exceeded rules—væ-væ, yet will I struggle and not give up the combat.

"23rd. Morning out on Frewen's business. Fishery committee. Noticed a day for slave motion. Dined at R. Smith's, with Burgh, Pitt, &c. Called Lord Chatham's about slave trade.

"24th. Very indifferent. Frewen's business and that of other 'fellows.'

"25th. Dined London Tavern. Fishery society's anniversary. Burgh with me. This is Lady-day—a natural æra—and henceforth a reform. To try if I can get into the country, both for health's sake and to do some slave business. For this last week I have not been able to look at the papers.

"26th. So feeble and indifferent that I would not go to court. Queen's drawing-room of congratulation.

Obliged to dine at the Speaker's. Found Clarkson and Ramsay at home, so kept up."

Throughout this time the privy council examinations were advancing, and in such interviews as that last recorded, gained often from the time demanded by a feeble body for its necessary rest, Mr. Wilberforce continued to direct the movements of his party. It was a marked feature of his character, that in the midst of a life of hurry and public business, he maintained, unimpaired, the freshness of his natural affections, and was peculiarly alive to the claims of private friendship. Thus, at this very season he espoused most warmly the cause of his old college tutor; and was ready too to enter with the voice of sympathy the mourning habitation of another friend.

"27th. Morning discussed with Pitt and Bishop of Lincoln about Johnian mastership. Proposed to meet Cookson at Baldock with Bishop of Lincoln, and sent him notice. The Bishop flew off in the afternoon. Spoke (in the House of Commons) to prove an alibi. Set off with Burgh about nine at night. Fell in with Cookson between Baldock and Royston about four in the morning. Sent him back with a proposition. On his informing us that they had forced Frewen to resign in favour of Carr, Burgh and I returned without going to bed, because not safe to stop lest we should be discovered. Reached London about twelve very faint. Ramsay and Clarkson.

"29th. Resolved to go to hear Mr. Woodd. When just going off heard from R. Smith that Mrs. Man-

ning was very ill. Drove (meaning to go to the Chapel Royal) with the Bishop of London, calling first in St. James's Place. Heard that poor Mrs.[4] Manning had died an hour before. Dr. Pitcairne behaved with great humanity. Called immediately. All in deep distress. Saw poor Bessy's corpse—could scarce help treading softly. Staid with them.

"31st. Called R. Smith's—to see, and sat with them. I am too easy and unconcerned at these awful events. Poor Bessy.

"April 1st. Indifferent. Called at Smith's on Manning. Then with Burgh to Shooter's Hill—declining great ball at the Pantheon. Heard Craven chosen master. Frewen bore his defeat well. To town to dine with Cambridge deputation at Pitt's—great party. Gisborne explained Cambridge election. E.'s offer of a bribe prevented his success. Got very late to great dinner. Dr. Jowett and I spoke of poor William Hey's son's death.

"April 3rd. Pitt consented to the repeal of the shop tax. Being more than ever plagued with 'fellows;' my health worn and no time for slave business, I resolve to go into the country and decree for Teston. Dined at Hampstead to see poor Smiths and Manning. T. too little impressed . . L. deeply so . . Poor Bessy's little children look delicate. Walked with ——, not careful enough to impress him duly."

Preparation for the approaching debate upon the slave trade now occupied his thoughts. And he not

[4] A favourite cousin, and one of the party in the expedition to Nice.

only retired for this season to seek in the country the leisure which he could not find in town, but introduced also into the details of social life a system of rigorous self-government, that no temptations to indulgence might relax his diligence or tarnish the brightness of his spirit. "For the next fortnight," he enters on the 6th of April, "to prepare for Slave discussion. Moderation in all things. This is the anniversary of Milnes' election, and of the night when Weddell and Foljambe resigned—an æra." He staid in London till the following day to be present at a meeting of the Society for Reforming Manners. "7th. Morning, at Pitt's, and Montagu House; there various fellows set on me. Heard from Milner, that ill of a fever; but after a short debate found that I must give up the Slave business if I went to him, so resolved against it. Off after dinner to Teston—Milner much on my mind—Burgh with me—had expected poor Milner—arrived at ten at night." This adherence to his plan in spite of Isaac Milner's illness, was not the slight sacrifice of one in whom personal attachment had been superseded by a general and fantastic benevolence. "Teston,"[5] he writes, "a charming place—very comfortable here, but for thoughts of poor Milner." And now that he was quietly settled in the country, he entered upon a course of severer study. "I resolve," he says upon the 8th, "to live with a view to health—Slave business—attention to my rules—no waste of eye-sight;

[5] The seat of his friend Mrs. Bouverie, now Barham Court.

and may God bless the work: may my religion be more vital from this retirement." A plan for the employment of time, and an accurate register of its fulfilment, strikingly attest his diligence. From eight to nine hours were devoted daily to his main business; and the Diary of a week's duration, in which every minute is summed up, records but one quarter of an hour as squandered time.—Here closeted all day over "Middle Passage Report and other papers," with Dr. Burgh, Mr. Ramsay, and Mr. Clarkson, he enters in his Journal on Good Friday,—"I am obliged to work too much and have too little leisure for serious thoughts, and yet, as it is my duty, I hope it may please God to make up the want to me." And on the following Easter Sunday,—"I am going to renew the dedication of myself to thee at thy table, O Lord. Be thou made unto me, O Jesus, wisdom and sanctification. Enlighten my understanding, renew my heart, purify my affections; guide and guard me through this vain world, and conduct me to those heavenly mansions where faith shall be lost in sight, and where secure from change thy people shall live for ever in thy presence."[6]—"Thursday, Friday, Saturday. Applied eight or nine hours daily to Slave business. Clarkson and Ramsay dined and supped—Ramsay's diligence. Sunday. Clarkson preached."

Whilst he was thus preparing for the approaching contest in the House, Mr. Pitt watched over the

[6] Diary.

daily progress of the cause in London. "My dear Wilberforce," he wrote upon the 10th of April, "I think you cannot do so wisely as to stay some time longer quietly in your present quarters, and we can easily manage to have the day for the Slave Trade postponed. I think the best way will be to speak to Duncombe, or Muncaster, or Addington, or any other man out of office, to put it off as by your desire till Thursday se'nnight, and unless I hear from you to the contrary, I will take care to have this done on Monday. If any later day should on further consideration be thought preferable, you may easily put it off again. Grenville and I have formed a project of reducing the case, as it appears from the Report, into a string of resolutions, which we will send you as soon as they are complete. Our idea is, that by bringing into one view all the leading points of the case, we shall bring on the discussion to great advantage and insure making a strong impression on the public. Many of them would be such as the opposers could hardly controvert, and would serve as the best foundation for the general motion either for a bill or an address. The parts of the Report which have yet been printed are the least material, but the whole will I believe be ready before Monday. The more we consider the case, the more irresistible it is in all its parts.

Ever yours,

W. PITT."

Upon the following Wednesday he heard again from Mr. Pitt.

TO W. WILBERFORCE, ESQ.

"April 22, 1789.

"My dear Wilberforce,

We have settled to-day to adjourn over Friday; I will therefore certainly be at Holwood on that day, and shall be exceedingly glad if you can come over. I hope to be there some considerable time before dinner. The Report was not corrected in time to be presented to-day. Nothing can be done to-morrow but going to St. Paul's; we therefore shall not be able to present it till Saturday; but this will do no harm, as the copies will be distributed, though somewhat irregularly, at the door of the House before it is formally presented; and we shall not be obliged to fix the day for the committee till after I have seen you.

"I discover some strange contradictions in the different accounts of the numbers imported into Jamaica, which it will be necessary to clear up if possible before any precise result can be stated respecting the course of population there; and I am afraid this will be a point of some difficulty, which I regret the more, as I see enough to satisfy my own mind that if it could be ascertained it would turn out very favourably.

Yours most sincerely,

W. Pitt."

"Went on Friday," he says on his return to Teston,[7] "to meet Pitt at Holwood. Would not go to London to the thanksgiving-day that I might apply close to business. Pitt very earnest about the Slave Trade. Returned on Saturday to Teston. The Report to be presented to-day."—"I staid at Teston attending to my Slave business till Monday, May 4th. Then with a view to attending at the Duke of Montagu's, I went to Clapham—Robt. Thornton's; but found that the Society Meeting had been on Monday morning. Tuesday, Clapham all day. Thursday, to Holwood—Pitt's with Burgh to do business together. Friday, Pitt went to town about dissenters. Resolved to stay, my mind not being made up, and needing time to settle it, and my main business requiring all my moments. Saturday, Pitt came again and Eliot."

The time which he was thus employing had not been wasted by his opponents. Meeting followed meeting; resolutions, newspapers, and pamphlets daily assailed the public with clamours of injury and threats of ruin: not merely colonial prosperity, but the commercial existence of the nation, it was boldly asserted were at hazard; and it was but too evident that the timidity and selfishness of interest were growing into a powerful opposition. In the midst of this rising storm a pleasant letter from Mr. Gisborne came with almost comic force.—"I have been as busy in town as a member of parliament, preparing himself to maintain the Abolition of the Slave Trade, and no doubt much

[7] Diary.

more usefully employed. I shall expect to read in the newspapers of your being carbonadoed by West Indian planters, barbecued by African merchants, and eaten by Guinea captains; but do not be daunted, for—I will write your epitaph."

At length on the 12th of May the question came before the House. "Monday, May 11th," says his Diary, "went to Montagu's with Burgh; where also Ramsay and John Clarkson. Tuesday very indifferent. Came to town, sadly unfit for work, but by Divine grace was enabled to make my motion so as to give satisfaction—three hours and a half—I had not prepared my language, or even gone over all my matter, but being well acquainted with the whole subject I got on. My breast sore, but de ceteris pretty well. How ought I to labour, if it pleases God to make me able to impress people with a persuasion that I am serious, and to incline them to agree with me!"

The speech with which he opened the debate argued forcibly the whole question. After attempting to disarm the peculiar hostility of West Indian opposition by describing the trade as a *national* iniquity, he surveyed the various evidence of conflicting testimony, and traced the destructive effects of the trade on Africa, its victims, and the colonies. These arguments were invested throughout with the glow of genuine humanity, and enforced by the power of a singular eloquence. Although the principal record of its excellence must be found in its effect upon that audience of orators to whom it was addressed; yet

there are portions which even in the barrenness of extract from "a most inaccurate Report"[8] retain much of their original beauty. Knowing "that mankind are governed by their sympathies," [9] he addressed himself to the feelings as well as the reason of the House; and we can even yet perceive the vigour of description which records the sufferings of the middle passage, "so much misery crowded into so little room where the aggregate of suffering must be multiplied by every individual tale of woe;"[10] and the force of that appeal which, after disproving the alleged comforts of the miserable victims, summoned Death as his "last witness, whose infallible testimony to their unutterable wrongs can neither be purchased nor repelled."

The effect of this speech both upon his friends and their opponents, almost warrants the declaration of Mr. Burke, when warmed by its present influence, "that the House, the nation, and Europe, were under great and serious obligations to the hon. gentleman for having brought forward the subject in a manner the most masterly, impressive, and eloquent. The principles," he said, "were so well laid down, and supported with so much force and order, that it equalled any thing he had heard in modern times, and was not perhaps to be surpassed in the remains of Grecian eloquence."

Mr. Pitt and Mr. Fox were no less loud in their eulogies; and the following character of the speech from a witness of a different order, is an interesting testimony to its effect. Bishop Porteus writes on the

[8] Private Mem. [9] Speech. [10] Ib.

13th of May to the Rev. W. Mason,—"It is with heart-felt satisfaction I acquaint you that Mr. Wilberforce yesterday opened the important subject of the Slave Trade in the House of Commons, in one of the ablest and most eloquent speeches that was ever heard in that or any other place. It continued upwards of three hours, and made a sensible and powerful impression upon the House. He was supported in the noblest manner by Mr. Pitt, Mr. Burke, and Mr. Fox, who all agreed in declaring that the Slave Trade was the disgrace and opprobrium of this country, and that nothing but entire abolition could cure so monstrous an evil. It was a glorious night for this country. I was in the House from five to eleven." "I congratulate you," writes Mr. Gisborne, "not merely on account of your speech, but of the effect which it seems to have produced, and of the manner in which it was supported by others, even by the inconsistent and incomprehensible Burke." "I have heard," wrote Mr. Mason on the 16th of May to one of Mr. Wilberforce's household, "both from the Bishop of London, and from Mr. H. Duncombe, how eloquently and how successfully your excellent master acquitted himself in the House of Commons. But as he spoke so many hours, I cannot help being extremely solicitous about his health, which I fear may be injured by so great an exertion. I therefore take the liberty of begging a line from you on this subject, which I firmly believe is equally interesting to us both; to you as a faithful servant, to me as a sincere friend.

I might, you may perhaps think, have with as much propriety addressed this letter to Mr. Burgh; but there give me leave to say you are mistaken, and for this reason, because when I write to you I have some chance of an answer.

I am, Sir,

Your very humble servant,

W. MASON.

"To Mr. Amos Dickson."

"My dear friend," writes I. Milner, "I am sensibly warmed by your letter this morning, in finding that you got through the *great* trial so much to your satisfaction." "I congratulate you sincerely," says Mr. (afterwards Lord) Erskine, "on the auspicious appearances which have followed from the exertions of very great talents in a very great cause."

The twelve resolutions which Mr. Wilberforce had moved, recorded the case of the friends of Abolition upon the Journals of the House. On the 21st of May the discussion was resumed, and after a debate of unusual warmth, the planters succeeded in deferring the decision of the House until counsel had been heard and evidence tendered at the bar. The first witness was summoned on the following Tuesday, and the examinations lasted until the 23rd of June; when the lateness of the season postponed to another session the decision of the question. Violent and irritating language was employed by the advocates of the trade in these concluding debates; and

one member in particular, imboldened apparently by the moderation and self-restraint of its especial object, reiterated his personal invective till he smarted under the merited rebuke of Mr. Pitt. "Dined," says the Diary of May 26th, "before House, then examination of African evidence. After Le Blanc had opened, John Barnes, by counsel, and some debate antecedent. Molineux's letter—Ramsay—M'Namara. Methodistical, &c. Sat till half-past eleven." Throughout this period his personal attendance in parliament was incessant, and "House—Slave Trade—extremely exhausted," is no unfrequent entry amongst his private memoranda. The session closed with the re-enactment of the Middle Passage Bill of the preceding year, amended by Sir C. Middleton and himself. Nor did he confine his attention to parliamentary exertion. His house in Palace Yard was open to all the supporters of abolition; and "friends to supper," or "dined before House," is almost daily in his Diary. He was always on the watch to turn to good account the resources of his personal influence. He engaged his private friends in the search of necessary information. "I will employ," writes Mr. Gisborne, "two or three hours a day in the service of the Africans and yourself." He persuaded Dr. Peckard, the original advocate of the cause at Cambridge, to mount again in its behalf the pulpit of St. Mary's. He enticed a reluctant witness through the resistless influence of the Duchess of Gordon; and the following extract from one of Dr. Burgh's letters shows how carefully he

endeavoured to gather strength from every possible assistant. "I remember that one day at Teston you expressed a wish that you had engaged the pens of Robertson, Smith, and some such established writers on your side. The opportunity at that time appeared to have lapsed, but surely now it has recurred; the favourable dispositions of such men are not a matter of indifference. If Gibbon were wanted, a fee would be a sufficient motive. I know not whether he can argue, but if supplied with the argument he certainly can put it in a manner with which some people are pleased. A man to whom the public have ever listened is of weight."

Throughout this period the tenor of Mr. Wilberforce's life differed little from that which has been described in the earlier part of the year.

"Friday, May 29th. Set off for Cambridge to see poor Milner—found him much weakened—in a very pious state of mind: his brother and Tillotson arrived about eleven.

"Sat. 30th. Went to poor Milner's bed-side. Dined St. John's Hall. Drank wine at P.'s. How vain and foolish is the general run of conversation here!—more so than in London.

"31st. Received the sacrament—much affected. May this day be the beginning of a new life with me—the great rule, 'Set your affections on things above.'

"June 2nd. Left Cambridge. Did not go to Montagu's, but with Burgh and H. Thornton to Clapham.

"3rd. Breakfasted with the Bishop of London, and

had some serious talk with him. Miss More there. Returned to Clapham—writing letters. Talked to poor Dupont, which brought me to my recollection.

"4th. King's birth-day. Went to St. James's. I felt how indispensable it is for me to take my line and keep it. What doest thou here, Elijah?—Dined Pitt's afterwards; great party—sad waste of time.

"5th. To town to meet sub-committee at my house—afterwards Grenville's appointment to Secretary of Stateship declared—chair vacant.

"8th. General meeting of the Society for Reforming Manners. Went to House unfit for work, to choose a Speaker, which prevented my speaking, and showing my friendship for Addington. Addington chosen 215 to 143. I will form some specific plan, or resolves, to secure my better attention in the House.

"17th. Put off Slave business, because other things in the House. Dined Bankes's with Burgh—large party—Jekyll, &c. Evening, after seeing Milner went to Hampstead; Pitt, Grenville, Bayham, Eliot—saw children in bed. Dreadful fire at the Opera House. How unsuited are all these companies to one of my objects and aims!

"23rd. Slave business put off till next year. Dined Lord Chatham's—Duchess of Gordon, Lady Charlotte, Duke of Rutland, Graham, Pitt, Dundas, &c. How ill suited is all this to me! how unnatural for one who professes himself a stranger and a pilgrim!

"24th. Sat to Rising for Muncaster. Evening

almost determined to go abroad about Slave business."

"Panting," he writes to Mr. Cookson, "after a little solitude and quiet, as you must perceive me to be from what I have been just throwing out, does it not seem a most preposterous determination to which I am come, of spending some time in and about Paris. Yet such is my plan, and I purpose to cross the water in a very few days. You will readily conceive that though the present state of politics in that quarter is justly interesting to the highest degree, I am not attracted solely, or indeed chiefly, by this consideration. This is professed to the million, but the Slave business is mainly in my view; and I do not feel myself at liberty to decline any path wherein I see a probability, however faint, of forwarding this great object. I need scarcely suggest to you, however, that you must be secret as the grave. My errand will be suspected of course, and the least hint from you will be caught at and circulated with avidity."

The opponents of the Abolition had appealed with no small success to that jealousy with which this country has ever regarded the commercial rivalry of France. She, it was alleged, would take up the trade which we abandoned, and our romantic sacrifices would tend only to increase her profits, and the sufferings of the negro race. Such an objection could alone be fully answered by the promise of a coincident abolition on the part of France. The force of the objection was widely felt. In replying to a letter in which Mr.

Wilberforce had endeavoured to gain his support, Mr. (now Earl) Grey avows that it formed his principal difficulty, and would probably induce him in spite of his feelings to give a silent vote against the Abolition. "If France alone," he continues, "would consent to abolish this detestable and inhuman traffic, the proposed plan would not have a more zealous supporter than myself." The same argument was continually advanced in the speeches and pamphlets of the West Indian body. French co-operation became therefore a most important step towards success at home; nor was the effort to obtain it at this time beyond the warrant of a reasonable hope. In the unquiet heavings which preceded the outbreak of the revolution, Mr. Wilberforce perceived many indications favourable to the cause of Abolition; and it was in the hope that his presence might bring them to a prosperous issue, that he meditated this excursion: with this view also he took an active part in endeavouring to obtain the supply of English corn which was soon after requested by the French government.

"25th June. Serious morning thoughts—may God make them permanent and productive. Old Mr. E. called by appointment, and made the strongest representations to me of my unkindness to his son. It is not wonderful. He knows nothing of the state of the case, and is anxious for the interests of one he loves. He said 'because C. loved me so well I ought to serve him.' I have done more for him than for any other person.

"July 1st. Dined up stairs with Addington, because

Duke of Gordon's dinner likely to be delayed till late by the House. Went at night to D. of Gordon's—Lenox, Pitt, Bankes, Dundas, &c. there. Phipps in and out about what appeared afterwards to have been Lenox's challenge to Swift. Staid till 12, and once more experienced how little these meetings are suited to me.

"Thursday, 2nd. Called up Pitt at 11. Wasted morning sadly. French application for corn. Wrote to Montagu about French expedition. 3rd. Montagu came to breakfast. We talked about French scheme; he acceded, and wrote to Mrs. Montagu, as also I did unknown to him. Came to town to Pitt's. Pitt found on inquiry at the council that we could send no corn to the French. Dined Pitt's before House. Lenox's duel with Swift, whom he wounded in the body.

"4th. Dined at Bishop of London's—Pitt, &c. Called on Rose in my way down. Rose suggested the moving of the corn business in the House. I mentioned it to Pitt at Fulham, and he not averse. He went off after dinner for Cambridge—we to town—and with Eliot looked over corn committee. Privy Council Report.

"5th. Burgh and I had some most serious conversation—he read his book against Lindsey. Then to Newton's church—rambling, but fervently devout. Called at H. Thornton's, and then Newton for an hour.

"6th. Montagu talked of going abroad. House—French supply of corn—Hawkins Browne came in late, and mentioned Lord Elgin's being just come from France. Montagu will go abroad.

"7th. Called on Lord Elgin before breakfast. French supply committee—could not give it them. Addington doubts if it would not be highly improper for me to go to Paris just at the present moment.

"12th. Obliged to put off French journey for House of Commons business, and doubtful if eligible to go to France in its present state of confusion and supposed want of stores. To inquire about all this.

"13th. Morning—very serious thoughts. To town; hurried to House, no business, Pitt having got the gout—saw him. At night determined not to go abroad.

"14th. The news came of Necker's being out, and of insurrections, firing, &c."

At such a season of excited feeling there was too much reason to apprehend that his intended visit would be viewed with great suspicion; and thinking, therefore, that he could effect his object better by an agent whose presence could excite no remark, he laid aside his projected journey. "The reasons," writes Mr. Gisborne, to whom he had before announced his plan, "which you allege for refraining from a present visit to France, are abundantly strong. Indeed, if you had shown your face in Paris the populace might very probably have chaired you round the city, as a patriotic and liberty-loving Englishman; and exposed you on their shoulders to the frowns of the monarch and the bullets of his Swiss guards." "Settled," he says soon after, "with Clarkson about going to France."

On the 7th of August, having received from Mr.

Wilberforce a written copy of directions, and been provided with a French companion to act as secretary and interpreter, Mr. Clarkson set out for Paris. During the five months which he spent in that city, Mr. C. communicated by letter his daily proceedings, and received in return the directions and supplies which the cause required. "Money," writes Mr. C.[11] "becomes now absolutely necessary. I should have explained this to our committee, but that you in your letter of instructions desired me to apply to you, should it be wanting." "In my last letter to you, I said it had been determined to draw on your account for £120, to advance the business here, &c. &c. More will not be wanted at present. The greatest part of the £56 has been spent, and I hope and believe very judiciously."

Mr. Clarkson was employed in stirring up the slumbering energies of the "amis des noirs," in circulating intelligence, refuting objections, and communicating every opening for useful exertion. His correspondence held the highest tone of promise. "La Fayette had undertaken to propose the Abolition in the National Assembly, which would probably, as soon as he ceased speaking, carry the question by acclamation." "In eight or ten days the subject will be brought into the National Assembly. Evidence will not be necessary: and I should not be surprised if the French were to do themselves the honour of voting away this diabolical traffic in a night." "I entreat you to write to Mons. La Fayette; he has absolutely

[11] Dec. 7

a greater respect for you than for any other person in the English nation. Urge him to act directly. A speech from him will make the difference of four hundred votes."

Repeated disappointments did not subdue Mr. Clarkson's hopes. On the 21st of June, he wrote, "I am convinced in my own mind that the Slave Trade will, in the course of a couple of months, fall in France." Nor was it unnatural that a man of sanguine temper should augur favourably to the cause from the first promise of those troubled times. He saw a great nation rousing itself from the long lethargy of despotism with a loud profession of universal liberty—the most powerful interests and the most hallowed associations vanished at once before its breath. All the early chiefs of the revolution, the workers of those moral wonders, were strenuous advocates of the Abolition. The financial dexterity of Necker, the eloquence and policy of Mirabeau, the popularity of La Fayette, the character of La Rochefoucault, were engaged with Brissot, Villeneuve, Condorcet, and Clavières distinctly in its behalf. The votes of the revolution club were counted on its side, Mirabeau withstood a bribe in his zeal for Abolition, and the amiable Louis gave a no less emphatic pledge of favour, in his unwearied perusal of one of Mr. Clarkson's volumes. Confident in such support, Mr. C. could not believe that the cause of virtue and humanity would be defeated by the planters of St. Domingo, or the slave merchants of Hâvre and Bourdeaux. And yet there were not wanting intimations

which led to a less hopeful conclusion those who were more removed from the eddy of passing incidents, and looked with a calmer eye upon the aspect of events. Although there appeared to him sufficient "probability of good" to warrant the attempt, yet Mr. Wilberforce could by no means enter into these exulting hopes. His own view is well expressed by one of his correspondents, in a letter of the 24th of September. "I have seen," says Mr. S. Hoare, "too much of the silent and powerful operations of self-interest, either real or imaginary, which pursues its object 'with a step steady as time, and an appetite keen as death,' to believe that the first impulse of patriotism and justice will counterbalance its influence. No, my friend, our work will be more gradual, but I look to the end with hope."

One of these intimations of failure requires especial notice, because it indicates the careful foresight with which this mission had been planned. In the instructions which he had prepared for Mr. Clarkson, Mr. Wilberforce writes, "Resist every tendency to the idea of the two countries entering into a treaty for the Abolition of the Slave Trade." This he plainly foresaw would suspend all measures of relief upon the issue of impracticable negociation.

Yet in this very difficulty the question became to a degree entangled. "The Comte de Mirabeau," says Mr. C. "is about to write to request your personal assurance of Mr. Pitt's sentiments upon the subject." This assurance he desired to produce in the National

Assembly, to prove that "the English would not take advantage, but follow France in the completion of such a measure." And upon this condition, "having calculated his own strength and the sentiments of the House, he undertakes to abolish the Slave Trade within three weeks." The required assurance was of course impossible. In spite of hopes, and promises, and intentions, delay followed delay; and Mr. Clarkson at length returned to England before one actual step had been taken in the business. No such healing waters flowed from this tumultuous and unholy source. In spite of all its early promise, the only effect of the French Revolution upon colonial slavery was to impart a suspicious character to the efforts of British humanity, and reproduce in St. Domingo her own bloody and ferocious features.

The close of the session of parliament just when he had determined not to visit Paris, released Mr. Wilberforce from the necessity of a further stay in London.

"July 15th. This day our last parliamentary business: henceforth a reform to be attempted. Earlier hours. Attention to health—bodily, mental, intellectual."

It was with these resolutions that he closed this season of London life. Charged as he perceived himself to be with a mission to his countrymen, which could be fulfilled only by his mingling much in social life, he was yet possessed by a growing conviction, that the habits which he was thus compelled to form were injurious to his own mind.

"July 16th. Went to town and dined at Lord Camden's, who very chatty and good humoured. Exceeded rules, and will forfeit to M. Called to see Pitt and lounged too long."

"Dined with 1;[12] he very chatty and pleasant. Abused 2 for his duplicity and mystery. Said 3 had said to him occasionally he had wished them, i. e. 2 and 4, to agree; for that both necessary to him, one in the Lords, the other in the Commons. 2 will never do any thing to oblige 1, because he is a friend of 4. 1 himself, though he speaks of 4 with evident affection, seems rather to complain of his being too much under the influence of any one who is about him, particularly of 5, who prefers his countrymen whenever he can. 1 is sure that 6 got money by the peace of Paris. He can account for his sinking near £300,000 in land and houses; and his paternal estate in the island which bears his name was not above £1500 a year; and he is a life tenant only of Wortley, which may be £8000 or £10,000. 1 does not believe 6 has any the least connexion with 3 now, whatever he may have had. 1 believes 7 got money by the last peace. 3 has told 1 that he dislikes 8 for having deserted 9. 2 is giving constant dinners to the judges to gain them over to his party. 10 was

[12] A sheet of "Private Table Talk," dated July 16, 1789, found among Mr. W.'s papers. The numbers seem to indicate

1 Lord Camden.	6 Lord Bute.	11 ——
2 Lord Thurlow.	7 ——	12 Prince of Wales.
3 The King.	8 ——	13 Duke of York.
4 Mr. Pitt.	9 ——	14 Duke of Clarence.
5 Mr. Dundas.	10 ——	

applied to by 11, a wretched sort of dependent of 12, to know if he would lend money on the joint bond of 12, 13, 14, to receive double the sum lent, whenever 3 should die, and either 12, 13, or 14 come into the inheritance. The sum intended to be raised is £200,000."

"'Tis only a hollow truce, not a peace, that is made between 2 and 4. They can have no confidence in each other."[13]

"17th. Obliged to dine with S. to meet Duchess of Gordon—Chatham and P. Arden. How ill these meetings suit my state of mind, and how much do they incapacitate me for the exercises of religion, and what wrong notions do they lead to of my real character!"—"I must abstract more, and live more by myself. I am too much conformed to this world. I ought not to aim at this, it is too dangerous for one so weak in the faith as I am. Let me endeavour to withdraw myself, and find my pleasure in the testimony of my conscience."

"18th. Came off to Teston, to see the Middletons and Mrs. Bouverie. How much better is this society! I will endeavour to confine myself more to those who fear God.

"19th. At Teston all day. Bad account of poor Ramsay." The Rev. James Ramsay, who by his work upon the treatment of the West Indian negroes commenced in the year 1784 that public controversy which was closed only by the abolition of the trade,

[13] Jan. 16, 1790.

had been once stationed in the island of St. Kitt's, and was now vicar of Teston in Kent. Forewarned by Bishop Porteus to expect a merciless revenge, he calmly engaged in the holy strife. He was soon assailed with every species of malignant accusation. "I have long," he wrote to Mr. Wilberforce in 1787, "been considered as a marked man, of whom it was lawful to suggest any thing disadvantageous, however false; to whom it was good manners to say any thing disagreeable, however insulting." His wounded spirit at length bowed before the storm; and the malignant calumnies of Mr. Molyneux, in the debate of May 21st, seemed evidently to hasten his deliverance from a world of cruelty and falsehood. The hatred which had imbittered a shortened life, triumphed without disguise over his grave. "Mr. Molyneux," writes Mr. Stephen, "announced the decease of the public enemy to his natural son in this island, in these terms, 'Ramsay is dead—I have killed him.'" From such an exhibition of hardened malignity, it is a relief to turn to the thoughts suggested by Mr. Wilberforce's Journal of July 21st:—"Heard that poor Ramsay died yesterday, at ten o'clock. A smile on his face now." [14]

"July 22nd. A note from Pitt, desiring me to dine

[14] Mr. Ramsay had requested Mr. Stephen upon his return to the West Indies, to examine and report upon the charges of his enemies. "I have not heard," is his testimony in a letter to Mr. Wilberforce, "a crime or a blemish imputed to Mr. Ramsay which has not been refuted afterwards in my presence, by some of his most inveterate enemies, better acquainted with the facts."

and go to Holwood with him, and stay two or three days. Would not do the latter, that I might get out of town, and while in it might be quiet and reform.

"25th. Resolved to go to Bath, and would not go to Holwood, or to the Middletons at Betchworth, that I might be quiet at home.

"27th. Set off for Bath and reached Sandleford. The old lady wonderfully spirited, and all very kind in their reception.

"28th. Almost compelled to stay with the Montagus all day. Mrs. Montagu senior has many fine, and great, and amiable qualities. Young Montagu all gratitude, and respect, and affection to her, and of most upright and pure intentions. 29th. Off for Bath, which I reached at night. 30th. Began the waters. Resolved to lead a new life, adhering more stedfastly to my resolutions. Do Thou, O God, renew my heart—fill me with that love of Thee which extinguishes all other affections, and enable me to give Thee my heart, and to serve Thee in spirit and in truth. In the evening my sister arrived; at twelve o'clock at night H. Thornton came."

"Read Barrow's sermon on love of God, and much affected by it—yet I get insensibly into a sluggish state of mind. I must amend—a continual sense of God's presence is the best preservative."

He continued a fortnight more at Bath with Miss Wilberforce and Mr. Henry Thornton, "a most excellent, upright, pure, and generous young man; may it please God long to continue him a blessing to the

public, and to amend his health." They had agreed "to spend the day so as to afford the hope that they might live together most rationally." From Bath he made an excursion to Bridgewater, in the hopes of meeting there his friend Edward Eliot. In this journey he fell in with Lord Kenyon on his circuit, and "heard him pass sentence upon five convicts who are all to die—sad but necessary severity. Engaged myself hastily to meet him next day at Wells. His condemning sentence serious and pathetic, but not one word of our Saviour or the repentance not to be repented of. 19th. To Wells. Dined to meet Kenyon. Glad to find him favourable to penitentiary houses and a less sanguinary system of penal law. Got off in the afternoon—and to Miss More's at night."

One day had been already spent in visiting the place to which Mrs. H. More had now retired from the flattery and bustle of the literary world—"Cowslip Green, a sweet place. Miss More's sister a worthy, pleasant-seeming woman." This was a friendship which his increasing desire of intercourse with those who feared God led him at this time especially to cultivate. There was no part of Mrs. H. More's character which he regarded with greater admiration than her active usefulness in the retirement of the country. "I was once," he said, "applied to by a Yorkshire clergyman, who desired me to assist him in obtaining a dispensation for non-residence upon his cure. He had been used, he said, to live in London with the first literary circles, and

now he was banished into the country far from all intellectual society. I told him that I really could not in conscience use any influence I possessed to help him; and then I mentioned to him the case of Mrs. H. More, who in like manner had lived with Johnson, Garrick, Burke, Sir J. Reynolds, &c. and was so courted by them all, and who had a great taste for such society; and yet had broken away from its attractions, and shut up herself in the country to devote her talents to the instruction of a set of wretched people sunk in heathen darkness, amongst whom she was spending her time and fortune in schools and institutions for their benefit, going in all weathers a considerable distance to watch over them, until at last she had many villages and some thousands of children under her care. This is truly magnificent, the really sublime in character. I delight to think of it, and of the estimation in which the sacrifice she made will be held in another world." "There is no class of persons," he would add, "whose condition has been more improved within my recollection than that of unmarried women. Formerly there seemed to be nothing useful in which they could be naturally busy, but now they may always find an object in attending to the poor."

"Thursday, Aug. 20th. At Cowslip Green all day. 21st. After breakfast to see Chedder. Intended to read, dine, &c. amongst the rocks, but could not get rid of the people; so determined to go back again. The rocks very fine. Had some talk with the people,

and gave them something—grateful beyond measure—wretchedly poor and deficient in spiritual help.—I hope to amend their state." It was this visit to Chedder, thus simply related in Mr. Wilberforce's Diary, which gave rise to Mrs. More's great exertions for her neglected neighbours. The vicar of Chedder at that time was non-resident, and his curate, who lived nine miles off at Wells, visited the parish on Sundays only. The spiritual destitution of such a parish, seen with his own eyes, greatly affected Mr. Wilberforce. The effects which followed from his visit are thus recorded in an unpublished Journal of Mrs. Martha More.

"In the month of Aug. 1789, Providence directed Mr. Wilberforce and his sister to spend a few days at Cowslip Green. The cliffs of Chedder are esteemed the greatest curiosity in those parts. We recommended Mr. W. not to quit the country till he had spent a day in surveying these tremendous works of nature. We easily prevailed upon him, and the day was fixed; but after a little reflection he changed his mind, appeared deeply engaged in some particular study, fancied time would scarcely permit, and the whole was given up. The subject of the cliffs was renewed at breakfast; we again extolled their beauties, and urged the pleasure he would receive by going. He was prevailed on and went. I was in the parlour when he returned; with the eagerness of vanity (having recommended the pleasure) I inquired, how he liked the cliffs? He replied, they were very fine,

but the poverty and distress of the people was dreadful. This was all that passed. He retired to his apartment and dismissed even his reader. I said to his sister and mine, I feared Mr. W. was not well. The cold chicken and wine put into the carriage for his dinner were returned untouched. Mr. W. appeared at supper, seemingly refreshed with a higher feast than we had sent with him. The servant at his desire was dismissed, when immediately he began, 'Miss Hannah More, something must be done for Chedder.' He then proceeded to a particular account of his day, of the inquiries he had made respecting the poor; there was no resident minister, no manufactory, nor did there appear any dawn of comfort, either temporal or spiritual. The method or possibility of assisting them was discussed till a late hour; it was at length decided in a few words, by Mr. W.'s exclaiming, 'If you will be at the trouble, I will be at the expense.' Something, commonly called an impulse, crossed my heart, that told me it was God's work, and it would do; and though I never have, nor probably shall recover the same emotion, yet it is my business to water it with watchfulness, and to act up to its then dictates. Mr. Wilberforce and his sister left us in a day or two afterwards. We turned many schemes in our head, every possible way; at length those measures were adopted which led to the foundation of the different schools."

"Resolved," he says upon the 23rd of August, "to think seriously to-day for to-morrow, my birth-day,

on which I shall be much more disturbed." His more private Journal thus records the thoughts to which he turned his mind. "Cowslip Green, birth-day eve. To-morrow I complete my thirtieth year. What shame ought to cover me when I review my past life in all its circumstances! With full knowledge of my Master's will, how little have I practised it! How little have I executed the purposes I formed last summer at Rayrigg! Wherein am I improved even in my intellectual powers? My business I pursue but as an amusement, and poor Ramsay (now no more) shames me in the comparison. Yet is there hope in God's mercy through Christ. May He give constancy and vigour to my resolutions. May I look ever forward to that day of account to which I am hastening; may I act as in His sight, and preserving the deepest self-abasement, may my light so shine before men, that they may see my good works, and glorify my Father which is in heaven." Though his own estimate of his exertions was thus humble, it was the surprise of others that he did so much. All his labours were performed in spite of the enfeebling presence of bodily debility. In the course of this month he wrote to Mr. Hey a full account of his present state of health. "Though by dint of medicine I have kept the enemy under, he still remains on the watch, ready to come forward in force on any favourable juncture. I am still so weak that the least irregularity disorders me; and I cannot, I dare say, possess you with an adequate sense of the

lassitude and internal bearing down which then oppresses me. I have still the same inability to walk any distance, much more to ride, without suffering from the exertion. During the winter I used but little exercise positively so called, though a London day always bringing its toils along with it is never a season of idleness and sloth; I went out chiefly in my carriage, and kept tolerable hours."

Mr. Hey, in replying to this letter, pressed upon him strongly the advantage he might probably derive from a course of Buxton water; and after a short time he most reluctantly followed his advice. "What have you to say," he writes in answer, "why judgment should not be pronounced against you? Thus are criminals addressed before they are consigned to their fate; and as I deem a sentence to Buxton to be in a high degree penal, the same allowance to speak in my own defence ought to be granted me in this instance. If on reconsideration the court adheres to its original opinion, I shall acquiesce, and suffer myself to be peaceably conveyed to the place of execution. Seriously speaking, after being in town for near eight months, I pant for retirement and the country, and feel most unwilling to plunge into the hurry of a very crowded watering-place. Yet if you believe there is a reasonable probability of my receiving benefit, I shall not hesitate to comply. I feel it to be an indispensable duty to do all I can for the perfect restoration of my health, leaving the matter with cheerful resignation in His hands, who best knows

what is good for us. If I do recover strength, may He enable me to use it for his glory."

"Monday, Aug. 24th. Left Cowslip Green for Bristol. Spent half an hour with Sir James Stonhouse —seventy-four; under many bodily tortures, yet patient and cheerful—much pleased with him. He recommended 12th of Hebrews, and 3rd of Lamentations. Spoke in the highest terms of Dr. Doddridge, and related the circumstances of his own conversion, when he belonged to a deistical club.

"25th. Over the water—old passage—with my sister, and Miss Hannah and Patty More. Dined at Chepstow — beautiful drive. 26th. By water to Tintern. 27th. We all separated—Miss Mores re-returned to Bristol—I and my sister on our way. 29th. Reached Hawkstone. Lady Montagu—Bryant magnetizes Sir Richard, &c.

"31st. Went to dine at Lord Kenyon's, Gredington —a party of his relations and friends—glad to see us —Lord Thurlow coming. Bryant Hill a devoted magnetizer, but seems a very worthy man. I thought it right to come here, but I am sadly idle of necessity, and unless I take care shall lose the power of application. Be this evening the beginning of a new era. May I trust in the Lord, and in the help of his grace.

"Sept. 3rd. Walked with Sir R. Hill over his beautiful place. Dined at Sandford, meeting Lord Kenyon and his three sons. Raining, but got out to see the castle. (Leon, Lord Kilmorey's ancestor, turned

hermit, &c.) Evening wasted my time. Let me be humble and fearful, but diligent.

"4th. Left Sir R. Hill's—most kindly sorry to part with us. More solitude suits me, though it is pleasing to see this family of love and peace. Arrived at Buxton at night.

"5th. Found that I had few acquaintance here—Archbishop of Canterbury and family, &c." "For the last week at Sir R. Hill's. He is indeed a good man: but how much time does one waste even in such a house. Let me as often as possible retire up into the mountain, and come down only on errands of usefulness and love. Oh may God enable me to fix my affections mainly on Him, and to desire to glorify Him, whether in life or death; looking unto Jesus, and continuing constant in prayer."

"6th. Heard prayers at the grand hotel. Tuesday, dined at the public table—uncomfortable—Archbishop civil. I live at home, and see few people—am reading Blackstone, and Goldsmith, and Spencer, and thinking—serious reading, Hopkins. 11th. Condemned my going on, (read, read, read,) and resolve to endeavour at a new plan of thought, &c.—and to keep the account plus and minus. To get much by heart and recapitulate. Long walk with the Archbishop.

"12th. Henry Thornton came in the afternoon.

"15th. W^m^ Hey came. With him all the afternoon and evening—much useful conversation." "If to you," he wrote to Mr. Hey, after this hasty visit, "it was an exertion to break from me, I assure you it was

painful to me to lose you so soon. Several topics have since recurred to my mind, upon which I had intended to converse with you. I am glad to hear of your safe return into harbour, begging only that in any future expedition, you will contrive to be able to keep the seas rather longer, or at least that we may not part company almost as soon as we have fallen in with each other."

On his return from a short expedition to Yoxall Lodge, he says, "Had two or three narrow escapes—drunken postilion nearly driving into Ashborne water—carriage spring broken, &c. Through God's mercy, got safe to Buxton. Oct. 14th. Gisborne and I dined at the great hotel—Lady Liddel—Hely Hutchinson, &c.—Dean of Middleham at night. 15th. Long and rational discussion with Gisborne after breakfast—Dean of Middleham at night—account of America. 16th. Long discussion with Gisborne about Test Acts. 23rd. Major Cartwright entered the room whilst discussing dissenters' rights—warm argument about Gisborne's and Paley's systems—Cartwright said that he had been of thirty religions, and should be perhaps of thirty more. 25th, Sunday. Saw a poor and very religious man—much affected by his meek piety. Oh may God enable me to turn to him henceforth. Buxton is in a sadly neglected state."

From Buxton he wrote to Mrs. Hannah More—

TO MRS. H. MORE.

" My dear Madam,

A letter from Cowslip Green brings with it in some sort the portraiture of its own scenery, and greatly mends the prospect to one shut up amidst bleak, rugged hills, and barren, unprotected valleys. But it is not on this account only that yours is acceptable, but as it excites various other pleasing and refreshing images, which having once found a place in my mind, will continue there, I trust, during the remainder of my life. May they be of still longer duration, and the benefits and the comforts of our friendship be experienced by both of us when time shall be no more. For my dear sister I must claim the same privilege, and, from what I have seen of yours, (though as this is not a case wherein one ought either to pronounce hastily, or to pay compliments, I would not absolutely decide,) I wish her also to be admitted into the confederacy. Thus much for discussion; now to business.

Your plan is a very good one, and I think you will find no difficulty so great as that of discovering a proper couple to carry it into execution. If you can meet with any such, by all means secure them. I will desire a friend of mine to make inquiry after a double-headed shot fitted for doing execution in the same way, and, if successful, I shall be at no loss for an object elsewhere, against which to direct my battery. As for the expense, the best proof you can give me that you believe me hearty in the cause, or sincere in the wishes expressed in the former part of this

letter, is to call on me for money without reserve. Every one should contribute out of his own proper fund. I have more money than time, and if you, or rather your sister, on whom I foresee must be devolved the superintendence of our infant establishment, will condescend to be my almoner, you will enable me to employ some of the superfluity it has pleased God to give me to good purpose. Sure I am, that they who subscribe attention and industry, &c. furnish articles of more sterling and intrinsic value. Besides, I have a rich banker in London, Mr. H. Thornton, whom I cannot oblige so much as by drawing on him for purposes like these. I shall take the liberty of enclosing a draft for £40; but this is only meant for beginning with.

Now for the mission . . . indeed, I fear with you nothing can be done in the regular way. But these poor people must not, therefore, be suffered to continue in their present lamentable state of darkness. You know you told me they never saw the sun but one day in the year, and even the moon appeared but once a week for an hour or two. The gravitation to Wells was too strong to be resisted. My advice then is, send for a comet—Whiston had them at command, and John Wesley is not unprovided. Take care, however, that eccentricity is not his only recommendation, and, if possible, see and converse with the man before he is determined on.

Very much yours,

W. WILBERFORCE."

With the Wesley family Mr. Wilberforce had formed a personal acquaintance at the house of Mrs. More.—"I went I think in 1786 to see her, and when I came into the room Charles Wesley rose from the table, around which a numerous party sat at tea, and coming forwards to me, gave me solemnly his blessing. I was scarcely ever more affected. Such was the effect of his manner and appearance, that it altogether overset me, and I burst into tears, unable to restrain myself."[15] In recommending one of "Wesley's comets" Mr. Wilberforce had no thoughts of encouraging dissent; for John Wesley was no dissenter from the church of England, nor were any of his preachers suffered during his life-time to attempt to administer the sacraments of the church. Had he not considered them as churchmen Mr. Wilberforce would not have suggested their employment, for in the same year he dissuaded a relation, who complained that in her place of residence she could find no religious instruction in the church, from attending at the meeting-house. "Its individual benefits," he wrote in answer to her letter of inquiry, "are no compensation for the general evils of dissent. The increase of dissenters, which always follows from the institution of unsteepled places of worship, is highly injurious to the interests of religion in the long run."

The moral desolation which he found in Chedder was a striking illustration of his common maxim, that

[15] His respect for Charles Wesley was shown in a yearly pension which he allowed to his widow until her death in 1822.

"the dissenters could do nothing if it were not for the established church;" for the absence of a resident clergyman had brought the village into a state of universal ignorance. "I have taken measures," he wrote again to Mrs. More upon the 2nd of October, "to send a competent supply of the books which you desired. Your labours can only be equalled by Spencer's lady knights, and they seem to be much of the same kind too, I mean, you have all sorts of monsters to cope withal." The monsters were, however, all subdued by this intrepid lady knight, supported by her generous champion, (the "Red Cross knight" was his familiar name with Mrs. Montagu,) without the eccentric succour of a "comet." "Your accounts," he writes somewhat later, "have afforded me the utmost pleasure, and I would persuade myself that they will be as comfortable next year. I trust you will speak freely when the money is exhausted . . indeed I conceive it must be all spent already . . not to do so would be to give way either to pride, or to false delicacy."

Upon the 26th of October he left Buxton, and "set off for Yorkshire. Got to Sheffield where found River-Dee Company going to dinner, so dined with them."

"27th. Off after breakfast for R. where a large party at dinner—B. the philosopher, &c. Played at cards evening and supped. S. how little of St. Paul. F. an old man. Alas! alas! sat up too late, and strong compunctions." After retiring to his room

he wrote upon a sheet of paper,[16] "I have been acting a part this whole evening; and whilst I have appeared easy and cheerful, my heart has been deeply troubled. That, if it should please God to call me away before to-morrow morning's light, I may not have contributed to encourage this fatal carelessness concerning the interests of futurity in never-dying souls, let me here record my sense of it, and warn all who shall read these lines, to remember that awful declaration, 'For all these things God shall call thee into judgment.'"

Before leaving Yorkshire he, "29th Oct. called at Lord Effingham's, and at Tooker's, where talked about dissenters. Then off for Wilford, where arrived at eight. 30th. At Wilford—seven little children; two of them poor Mrs. Manning's." Here he began immediately a course of regular employment. "To aim at eight hours—minor business, business, and serious,—added together, and keep an accurate account. May God enable me to live more to his glory."—"Oh how difficult it is to keep alive in the soul any spark of the true spirit of religion! 'Quicken me, O Lord.' Form in me daily that new creature which is made after thy likeness. May I be endeavouring in all things to walk in wisdom to them that are without, redeeming the time; labouring for the spiritual improvement of others; mortifying the flesh, and living soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. For the ensuing week let it be my main care to exterminate a sensual spirit rather by substi-

[16] Memorandum found amongst his papers.

tuting better regards in its place, than by attacking it directly; yet being moderate in all enjoyments, and looking through them to the gracious Author of all good. Sober-mindedness, good-nature, plan for time, &c. Topics for conversation and study. Looking unto Jesus." "November 14th. Reading Blair and other works for oratory, criticism, &c.; and Arts and Sciences in Chambers; and beginning Poetry. 17th. Resolved with difficulty to start for Cookson's, and then to my many and great matters in town. Miss L. Smith very seriously disposed. Had I looked for them, doubtless I had found many opportunities of serious conversation and mutual edification. May God forgive my neglected occasions, and enable me to profit more from them in future. 21st. Arrived safely at Forncett. I ought to be most thankful that I thus go out and come in safely." "On an inquiry I think it right to stay here for a while, God willing, rather than to remove as yet. To form my plan and keep to it by God's blessing. Try at eight hours at least of all sorts. Topics ready for discussion and conversation. Moderation—early hours—relaxation regulated,—and as I stay here may I employ my leisure well, and try to walk as remembering God's eye is ever over me. Books—reading—commonplaces, &c."[17]

"Sunday, 6th. Had some very serious thoughts and strong compunctions, from which I hope good will result. Remember, O my soul, that if thou availest not thyself of these warnings, the greater will be thy con-

[17] Nov. 29. Diary.

demnation. May I be enabled to place my happiness in communion with God, and may I be found in the spotless robe of Christ's righteousness, covering my iniquities from the pure eyes of a holy God. When B. dined here I was too vain and talkative (humility should be joined to cheerfulness). At night a long and earnest conversation with my host upon religion. May God bless it to both of us. 7th. Unwell, perhaps from being too studious. I must not read any thing requiring thought just before bed-time—I sleep ill. But oh how thankful ought I to be for the mercies I enjoy. 13th. I have been too sedentary for my health this last week. I must take more air, and be satisfied with eight hours' reading, if I find more too much. This last week—Letters, Lear, Othello, Hamlet, Macbeth, Twelfth Night—Ferguson, Bible, Johnson's Lives, Doddridge's Sermons — a topic daily henceforth—Recapitulation."

"I shall ponder," he tells Mr. Hey, "the contents of your letter with the attention due to a subject so important. I wish to know in what state are the funds of your West Riding Charity[18] for catching the colts running wild on Halifax Moor, and cutting their manes and tails, and sending them to college. If a contributor would be acceptable, I would most cheerfully give something towards an institution I so highly approve, but my name must not be mentioned."

To Mrs. Hannah More he writes the day before he left Forncett, "I have been for some time staying in

[18] The Elland Society.

a lurking-hole, more secret than even Cowslip Green, but to-morrow I mean to sally forth upon the London road, and shall flutter about town until the meeting of parliament."

"Dec. 24th. Got to H. Thornton's, in King's Arms yard, and staid there all night. 25th. Christmas-day. With H. Thornton to the Lock, morning—and sacrament. Returned with him, dined and slept.

"28th. Dined Grenville's—Pitt—Pakenham—Lord Lieutenant Westmoreland—P. Arden—Mornington—Belgrave. 29th. Pitt disappointing me about Holwood, drove to Montagu's."

Though his character had evidently risen in the last twelve months, yet the new year opened with strong expressions of dissatisfaction with himself—a sure consequence of aiming at an elevated standard.

"Jan. 1st. Lock—Scott—with Henry Thornton—'These forty years in the Wilderness'—received the sacrament. Most deeply impressed with serious things, shame from past life, and desire of future amendment." "I have been receiving the sacrament after an excellent sermon of Scott's, and with the deepest humiliation I look up for mercy, through Christ, to that God whose past mercies I have so often abused. I resolve by God's help to mortify the flesh with the affections and lusts, so far as my very infirm health will permit me, and to labour more and more to live the life I now live in the flesh, in the faith of the Son of God. How should I be humbled by seeing

the little progress I have made since 1786! Poor Newton dines with me to-day, on whom I then called. He has not dined from home on new-year's day for thirty years. I shall now form a set of rules, and by God's help adhere to them. My health is very bad, a little thing disorders me, at thirty and a half I am in constitution sixty. 'The night cometh when no man can work.'" "Oh may divine grace protect and support me throughout the ensuing campaign, preserve me from the world's mistaken estimate of things, and enable me to be a Christian indeed, and to glorify God by my life and conduct."

Though his state of health was so great a hinderance to exertion, this year was one of intense and incessant occupation. "Business first and grand," says his plan, "for this winter,—1. Slave Trade. 2. General preparation for parliamentary business. 3. General topics. 4 Historical and political, &c. axioms. 5. Ferguson's History and Society, Shakespeare, Cowper, Adam Smith, (Swift, Pope, Addison, Johnson, &c. for relaxation,) English History, Barrow, South, &c. 6. Finances. 7. Reformation Society and its plans—Sunday-travelling Bill—wine licenses, &c."

His intercourse with general society, "from which I dare not more withdraw," and into which he endeavoured to carry his high principles of action, occupied much time. His great cause alone furnished matter for unremitting toil. But besides this, he applied himself with diligence to all the important

questions which were brought forward in parliament; and was most assiduous in his attention to the private business of the great county which he represented. "When you appear on this stage," writes Mr. James Grenville, "you must always expect to be scrambled for. The land-owner, the manufacturer, the canal man, the turnpike man, and the iron man will each have a pull in his turn."

His house was continually open to an influx of men of all conditions. Pitt and his other parliamentary friends might be found there at "dinner before the House." So constant was their resort, that it was asserted, not a little to his disadvantage in Yorkshire, that he received a pension for entertaining the partisans of the minister. Once every week the "Slave Committee" dined with him. Messrs. Clarkson, Dickson, &c. jocosely named by Mr. Pitt, his "white negroes," were his constant inmates; and were employed in classing, revising, and abridging evidence under his own eye. "I cannot invite you here," he writes to a friend who was about to visit London for advice, "for, during the sitting of Parliament, my house is a mere hotel." His breakfast table was thronged by those who came to him on business; or with whom, for any of his many plans of usefulness, he wished to become personally acquainted. He took a lively interest in the Elland Society; and besides subscribing to its funds £100 per annum, (under four anonymous entries to avoid notice,) he invited to his house the young men under education, that he might be able to

distribute them in proper situations. No one ever entered more readily into sterling merit, though concealed under a rough exterior. "We have different forms," he has said, "assigned to us in the school of life—different gifts imparted. All is not attractive that is good. Iron is useful, though it does not sparkle like the diamond. Gold has not the fragrance of a flower. So different persons have various modes of excellence, and we must have an eye to all." Yet no one had a keener or more humorous perception of the shades of character. "Mention, when you write next," says the postscript of a letter to Mr. Hey on the announcement of a new candidate for education, "the length of his mane and tail;" and he would repeat, with a full appreciation of its humour, the answer of his Lincolnshire footman, to an inquiry as to the appearance of a recruit who presented himself in Palace Yard,—"What sort of a person is he?" "Oh, sir, he is a rough one." The circumstances of his life brought him into contact with the greatest varieties of character. His anti-room was thronged from an early hour; its first occupants being generally invited to his breakfast table; and its later tenants only quitting it when he himself went out on business. Like every other room in his house it was well stored with books; and the experience of its necessity had led to the exchange of the smaller volumes, with which it was originally furnished, for cumbrous folios, "which could not be carried off by accident in the pocket of a coat." Its groupe was

often most amusing; and provoked the wit of Mrs. H. More to liken it to "Noah's ark, full of beasts clean and unclean." On one chair sat a Yorkshire constituent, manufacturing or agricultural; on another a petitioner for charity, or a House of Commons client; on another a Wesleyan preacher: while side by side with an African, a foreign missionary, or a Haytian professor, sat perhaps some man of rank who sought a private interview, and whose name had accidentally escaped announcement. To these mornings succeeded commonly an afternoon of business, and an evening in the House of Commons. Yet in this constant bustle he endeavoured still to live by rule. "Alas," he writes upon the 31st of January, "with how little profit has my time passed away since I came to town! I have been almost always in company, and they think me like them rather than become like me. I have lived too little like one of God's peculiar people." "Hence come waste of time, forgetfulness of God, neglect of opportunities of usefulness, mistaken impressions of my character. Oh may I be more restrained by my rules for the future; and in the trying week upon which I am now entering, when I shall be so much in company, and give so many entertainments, may I labour doubly by a greater cultivation of a religious frame, by prayer, and by all due temperance, to get it well over."

He was much occupied in the early part of this session by the fresh application made by the dissenters for the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts. "I

am glad," writes Mr. Gisborne, "that you are about to consider this subject thoroughly before your attention is pre-occupied and divided by the Slave Trade discussion in the House of Commons." Though he disliked the peculiar form of a sacramental test, yet he thought some such restriction so needful that he had voted against his friend Mr. Beaufoy when in 1787 the repeal of these enactments was demanded. In the spring of 1789, he would not leave Holwood to vote upon the question, his "mind not being made up." Since that time he had maturely weighed the subject, and to secure its full consideration he had engaged three of his friends, who took different sides upon the question, (Mr. Gisborne being for and Mr. Hey and Mr. Mason adverse to the repeal,) to state to him in writing the grounds of their opinions. By them the case was well argued; Mr. Hey showing most forcibly the necessity of an established church for the welfare of the nation, and the need of such enactments for the safety of the church, while Mr. Gisborne's letter embodied all that could be said upon the opposite side. "He suffers, I suspect," says Mr. Mason, "his liberality of spirit to carry him beyond what prudence would suggest at the present time, when Socinianism is so very prevalent. I should say, smilingly, that after having argued so well against expediency, he thinks himself now bound to set his face against every thing that may seem to be expedient." "Were you a man possessed merely of an every-day kind of conscience," writes Dr. Burgh, "I

should answer your letter on the Paleian principle, and advise you by all means to vote with the dissenters, for it is surely very expedient that this county should be saved from all the evils of a contest at the next election; especially as it does not signify a rush on which side you vote as an individual; for let the question be determined in your House for the repeal of the Test Act, which I think highly improbable, the Bill will undoubtedly be flung out by the House of Lords." The debate upon the question came on in the House of Commons upon the 3rd of March, when the repeal of the restrictive acts was moved by Mr. Fox in a speech in which he directly alluded to the opposition of the member for Yorkshire. In a correspondence with an active committee of dissenters amongst his constituents in the town of Leeds, "some garbled quotations from which," says Dr. Milner, "they have shamefully published," Mr. Wilberforce had declared that his great reluctance "to oppose the repeal of these laws had been overcome by his conviction of their present necessity." To this conviction he was brought by the persuasion, that to give such an increase of influence to the dissenting party would endanger the Liturgy and Articles of the church. The prevalence of those loose principles of faith amongst the body of the clergy, which had spread under the ascendency of a latitudinarian party,[19] had been alarm-

[19] It was the settled policy of Sir Robert Walpole and some succeeding administrations, to transfer the dignities of the church from the strictly and uncompromisingly orthodox, to men of a more lax and liberal faith.

ingly displayed in the petitions from the Feathers' Tavern; and the time was inauspicious for concessions which might promote the activity of dissent, or relax the strictness of orthodoxy. "I can imagine few things," he has since said, "more likely to call forth the bitter and, I must add, mischievous sneer of some future Hume or Gibbon, than that those who are in possession of the dignities of the church should be seen endeavouring to escape from the unfashionable opinions with which the acceptance of its honours and emoluments was associated in primitive times. It reminds me invincibly of a reply of Mr. Fox to the Feathers' Tavern application for release from subscription to the Articles. "They have," he said with an exordium which I will not repeat, "They have the meat—they shall have the sauce too."[20]

"Not a day has passed," wrote Mr. Wilberforce upon the 13th of March to Mr. Hey, "since the night of our memorable majority, (294 to 105,) wherein I have not had it in contemplation to call upon you to rejoice with me on the result of the dissenters' application. Yet the satisfaction I receive from this decision is by no means unalloyed; but I will not enter into particulars, the field would be too large at present. I was rising to speak immediately after Mr. Fox, and designed to discuss the whole subject, but Mr. Pitt desired me to give way for him; and I was myself, as well as the House, too much tired at one o'clock in

[20] Letter to the Rev. Francis Wrangham, Feb. 5, 1816.

the morning (I had been in it ever since eleven o'clock on the preceding day) to do more than deliver a public notification of my opinions."

The large majority by which the motion was this year rejected, marks the rising dread of French principles. "When I entered life," Mr. Wilberforce has said, "it is astonishing how general was the disposition to seize upon church property. I mixed with very various circles, and I could hardly go into any company where there was not a clergyman present without hearing some such measure proposed. I am convinced that if the public feeling had not been altered by our seeing how soon every other kind of plunder followed the destruction of tithes in France, our clergy would by this time have lost their property."

But the main business of this spring was the conduct of the Abolition cause. He had opened the campaign by a motion made upon the 14th, and carried after much opposition upon the 27th of January, for referring to a special committee the further examination of witnesses. This became now his daily work, and with the help of the late William Smith he conducted personally all the examinations. Here he reaped the fruit of his deep acquaintance with the whole subject, as well as of those habits of self-government which he had been at such pains to form. Nothing but his accurate knowledge of details could have prevented his being duped by the misrepresentation of too many of the witnesses; whilst the angry discussions in which he was continually involved

rendered a practised temper no less needful than a sagacious judgment.

It became often necessary to sift the evidence by private inquiries; and for this purpose he maintained a constant correspondence with intelligent persons resident at the principal slave ports of the kingdom. "The name of the Calabar tragedy" (he thus writes to Dr. Currie of Liverpool) "is probably familiar to you; it is already I think indisputably proved, yet I will confess to you there are some parts on which I should be glad to have more light. Now what I want is to find out some persons who were present on that bloody day, which, it being only twenty-three years since, cannot I conceive be very difficult; and to fish out from them all they know of the whole transaction, particularly as to the steps that led to it, and the consequences by which it was followed: the only allegation which reflects any discredit on the story, being one made by Captain Hall, that the English were as well received afterwards as before. But this inquiry must be conducted with the utmost caution, lest our opponents should discover our object of pursuit, and either counteract us directly, or at least use it as an argument to prove we are not satisfied with the case as it stands. Captain Lace, one of the captains engaged, and resident at Liverpool, has given some most irrational evidence on the subject before the select committee of the House of Commons. Could you not contrive to learn any thing he may have said on it in private conversation; not with a

view to contradict his public testimony, unless, which is very unlikely, the party to whom he opened himself should be willing to come forward, but to suggest questions which being asked of any other witness might detect Captain Lace's mistatements. I note down, below, the names of the ships and masters concerned in the tragedy in question; and I am, with respect and esteem,

Sir,

Your most obedient and obliged servant,

W. WILBERFORCE."

This was a period of no ordinary labour to the leader in the struggle. In a letter written forty-two years later,[21] he reminds Mr. Smith of these early labours: "You cannot, any more than myself, have forgotten the weeks after weeks, or rather months after months, in which our chief, though not most cherished companions, were that keen, sour S——, that ponderous, coarse, Jack Fuller-like F——; a very graphical epithet if you remember the man." His house too throughout this time was continually full. The evening hours were devoted to consultations on the common cause; and to keep so many different agents in harmonious exertion required no little management. A few extracts from his Diary will illustrate these employments.

"March 18th. Dined at home—William Smith tête-à-tête (partly religious); then Clarkson came, and

[21] From Brighstone, Isle of Wight, May 5, 1832.

Muncaster, and looked over evidence. 20th. Clarkson and Eliot dined, (Slave business,) then Hunter and Sansom came from the city; a different set of ideas in their minds, and in those in our friends. 22nd. Dined at home—Smith, Clarkson, and Dickson—Slave business till 11 at night. 25th. Committee as usual. 27th. Town from Clapham to committee as usual. Dined Bishop of Salisbury's—Miss More, Sir J. Bankes, Mrs. Garrick, &c. We talked of Captain Bligh's affair, and Sir Joshua (like myself) was not surprised at it.—Otaheite Calypso's island. 29th. Committee—House—Captain Williams's business till 12¼ at night. Not attentive enough—admired Fox and Pitt, and the lawyers. Habit will do much, I will practise. 31st. Slave committee—wrangling—got hold of Norris—then House till ½ past 10. April 1st. Committee—some wrangling—final Report. 2nd. My plan of time this winter has been that of dining late, and I have seldom done any business after dinner. I doubt about this going into company so much, yet I dare not decide against it, I am too complicated in my plans. 3rd. Looked over the witnesses, &c. Clarkson and Dickson dined with me. 4th. Easter Sunday. Sent to Christian to go to Lock, hoping in his present state of mind, having lately heard of his brother's conduct, an impression might, by God's blessing, be made upon him. 5th. Up 6¾—bed 12. Hard at work on Slave Trade evidence all day with 'white negroes,' two Clarksons and Dickson. 6th. Hard at work again with Clarksons and

Dickson on evidence. C. dined with us; he seems to have got over his grief too much."

On the afternoon of this day he set off, after "much doubting," to spend a single day at Holwood. "7th. Walked about after breakfast with Pitt and Grenville —wood with bills." "We sallied forth armed with bill-hooks, cutting new walks from one large tree to another, through the thickets of the Holwood copses." Yet even in these seasons of recreation, he kept a watch over himself, and rigidly noted down every instance in which he had at all neglected his task of social reformation. "Forgot my resolutions, and too little attended to opportunities of impressing seriously. Surely Pitt must deem of me as of any other man." "15th. Dined at home—Clarkson and Dickson—evidence—Beaufoy and a shoal of people came in. 16th. Breakfasted Pitt's—Sunday Bill, &c. 17th. Met Samuel Hoare at the Shakespeare Gallery—picture of Dying Cardinal, and poor Tom Grosvenor's remark—Hoare, Sansom, Wedgwood, Granville Sharpe, Clarkson, Henry Thornton, and Whitbread dined with me. These city people better than at our end of the town. 19th. Evidence, &c.—Saw multitudes of people on business."

The witnesses in favour of the Trade had now been heard, and the friends of Abolition found with no small astonishment that they should not introduce their own evidence without a new struggle. "20th. Saw Pitt in bed, and talked with him on the enemy's impudent attempt to resist our calling evi-

dence: at his suggestion went to Fox and saw him; also called on Burke, who kept me an hour and a half talking about W. Hastings. House—then dined at home—Muncaster and 'white negroes;' but I find one cannot make short work of it with a number, so I must not look for it. Felt much when I saw poor Burke. Very faint and indifferent to day. 21st. Busy morning and evening reading evidence. 22nd. Morning reading evidence; at two o'clock went to Clapham with 'white negroes,' and prepared for to-morrow."

TO WILLIAM WILBERFORCE, ESQ.

"Dear Wilberforce,

Mr. Fox has just told me (but without mentioning his authority) that he learns that Lord Penrhyn's motion to-morrow is not to stop your examination; but to fix a call of the House at about three weeks hence, on the supposition that your evidence will probably by that time be closed, and that it is essential at all events to decide the business this session. I told Mr. Fox that I thought your evidence would probably last for a longer period, that when it is closed some time must be given to consider it, and that it therefore seemed impossible that any question should come on in less than six weeks from this time, before which all other business would be over; that therefore probably the question could not come on at all this session; but that at all events, if the evidence should be closed in any reasonable time, less than a fortnight would not be sufficient for considering it, and

that would allow time for a call being made then, if it should finally be determined to bring on the question. On this ground I think the call to-morrow may be resisted, and Mr. Fox seemed to be of the same opinion. I wish however you would consider it in the mean time, and let me know what you think of it this evening or to-morrow morning.

Ever yours,

House of Commons,
Thursday, April 22. W. PITT."

Yet in contradiction of this announcement made by Mr. Fox, the introduction of further evidence was absolutely opposed by Lord Penrhyn. His proposition after some debate was negatived without a division. "All morning," says the Diary of April 23rd, "at evidence, then to town—and House. Our opponents, blessed be God, fairly beat. A throng at home at night. 24th. Hard at work all day with Captain Wilson, and at night Mr. Dalrymple, Burgh, Dickson, Clarkson, and Captain Wilson dined with me. 26th. Committee morning, and after dinner went to work till late at slave business. 27th. Committee as usual—came over and dined, and afterwards slave business. All this time examining and preparing my evidences and extremely occupied, and seven or eight people living constantly in my house. 28th. Committee as usual. Crowther dined with us, and gave us an account of the shipwreck and Riou's fortitude." Mr. Crowther owed his education to the Elland Society, and had been recently selected by Mr. Wilberforce for a chap-

laincy which he had prevailed on Mr. Pitt to found for New South Wales. A letter of the 17th of April announced to Mr. Wilberforce the shipwreck of the vessel in which Mr. Crowther sailed. "On the 11th of December we left the Cape. On the 21st saw two islands of ice in lat. 42. longitude 38. 30. E. distant about three leagues. About noon on the 23rd we saw another and bore down towards it, hoisted out the jolly boat and one of the cutters and picked up some small floating pieces, and then bore away N. W. in order to get entirely clear of the ice. About half-past eight the same evening, the officer on the forecastle cried out, 'An island of ice close a-head' (for being in the dark and a very thick mist we could see very little before us). Before the alarm was sounded through the ship, she had struck one violent blow; and directly after she struck again, and got upon the ice, sliding along into an immense cavern in its side. Every effort was made to save the ship until Friday, when it was judged necessary to quit her. The captain would not leave her, but wrote a letter to the Admiralty. Two boats besides ours were hoisted out. We were taken up by a French ship and came in it to the Cape, after being in the open boat from Dec. 25th to Jan. 3rd, exposed to cold, hunger, and thirst, having scarcely any clothes; two gills of water per day, and at the most two pounds of bread, amongst fifteen." To this account he added in a conversation, which with its racy Yorkshire dialect Mr. Wilberforce delighted to preserve, "When the ship's condition

was altogether hopeless Captain Riou sent for me into the cabin, and asked me, 'Crowther, how do you feel?' 'How? Why I thank God pretty comfortable.' 'I cannot say I do. I had a pious mother, and I have not practised what she taught me; but I must do my duty. The boats will not hold one third of our crew, and if I left the vessel there would be a general rush into them, and every one would perish. I shall stay by the ship, but you shall have a place; and be sure you go in the master's boat, for he knows what he is about, and if any boat reaches the shore it will be his.' In the bustle of embarking I got into the wrong boat, and found out my mistake too late to alter it. The boats however neared each other to make an exchange of some of their provisions, and I heard Riou call to me, 'If you 've a heart, Crowther, jump.' I made the attempt, and just reaching the boat fell backwards in the water, but was pulled in amongst them." No other boat than that into which he was thus taken ever reached the shore. "John Clarkson alone," of those who heard this conversation, says Mr. Wilberforce, "would not despair of Riou." "I have seen" said Mr. Clarkson, himself a naval man, "such wonderful escapes at sea, that so long as the captain preserves his self-possession I can never despair of any ship." "Thursday, 29th," says the Diary, "waked by a note saying that the Guardian, Riou, had arrived safely at the Cape. Poor Crowther could not believe it—sent him to Thurlow for a living." Captain Riou was preserved for a more

distinguished end; his gallant death in the hour of victory at Copenhagen has linked his name with the memory of Nelson.

Mr. Wilberforce's incessant occupation continued through the session. "29th April. Committee morning—dined at Pitt's before the House. 30th. Morning, committee as usual—and again evening busy on Norris's examination. May 1st. Morning, examining Norris's impeachment of credibility. 3rd. Committee —Norris, &c. Company as usual at dinner before the House. 5th. A day of business, but knocked up at night. 8th. Committee, morning—dined at the Bishop of Salisbury's. Large party—Pitt, Grenville, Montagu, Ryder, Speaker, &c. Alas, alas, how week passes unimproved after week! Company every day—though the Parliament Street Coffee-house occasions a diversion. Greatly do I doubt how far all this answers, which so draws my mind from heavenly things. May 10th. Committee and House. Often now sat in committee, and again in evening in the House, but found that this did not agree with me. 20th. Committee, and so indeed every day. All this time perpetual company. Milner condemns it—Speaker thinks better end—H. Thornton and Eliot approve."

"It is whispered to me," he writes to Mr. Hey from the House of Commons, on the 22nd of May, "that C. is half affronted at my not having written to him on his business; one reason of which is the unsettled state of the business itself; but more than all, the full

employment I have had, and the quantity of indispensable writing in the committee, where I could not officiate by deputy. Every day we sit in it the whole morning; after it we repair to the House: and I have besides to go through the attorney's task of talking with witnesses, and making out what they can say." "I am almost worn out, and I pant for a little country air, and quiet: the former I hope soon to enjoy, the latter is more uncertain. If I don't take care mine will be '*a case*' shortly."

These employments were soon afterwards exchanged for a hasty three weeks' canvass, preparatory to the general election of June, 1790. "June 7th. Morning unwell. Prepared a paper on Sir W. Dolben's bill for the Lords. To town to the committee—up soon for Fox's summing up on Hastings' trial. Westminster Hall—all bored and tired. Fox's speech very dull. 9th. Committee—calls on grandees—home, and by exertion got off and travelled to Stevenage. Muncaster's affection at parting, and Will. Smith's. 10th. Travelled on all day—calling at Bishop of Lincoln's—talked about Milner." During this hasty visit, he received a cordial welcome from his constituents, and was re-elected at its close by general acclamation. In his private Diary, he reviews the time which had been spent in this canvass, and records his narrow escape from a serious accident, when his carriage was overturned in the village of Bessingby, near Bridlington. "The confusion of a canvass, and the change of place, have led me lately to neglect my

resolution. But self-indulgence is the root of the evil: with idleness it is my besetting sin. I pray God to enable me to resist both of them, and serve Him in newness of life. How little have I thought of my deliverance the other day, when the carriage was dashed to pieces! How many have been killed by such accidents, and I unhurt! Oh let me endeavour to turn to Thee." He adds a few days later, "I have been thinking too much of one particular failing, that of self-indulgence, whilst I have too little aimed at general reformation. It is when we desire to love God with all our hearts, and in all things to devote ourselves to his service, that we find our continual need of his help, and such incessant proofs of our own weakness, that we are kept watchful and sober, and may hope by degrees to be renewed in the spirit of our minds. Oh may I be thus changed from darkness to light! Whatever reason there may be for my keeping open house in Palace Yard, certain it is, that solitude and quiet are favourable to reflection and to sobermindedness; let me therefore endeavour to secure to myself frequent seasons of uninterrupted converse with God."

CHAPTER VIII.

JULY 1790 TO DECEMBER 1791.

Summer excursions—Diligent study of Slave Trade question—John Thornton—New Parliament—Pitt's speech on Hastings' impeachment—Abridgement of evidence on Slave Trade—Increased strength of West Indian party—Wesley's "last words"—Abolition again negatived—Bath—Sierra Leone Company—Visits to Rothley Temple and Yoxall Lodge.

THE material benefit which Mr. Wilberforce had received from a course of Buxton waters the preceding year, led him at Mr. Hey's desire to return there this summer. He reached it early in July, but his further stay was soon after interrupted by an unexpected call to town.

"July 19th. Felt very low on arriving in London. Saw Pitt that night and discussed. 20th. Dined at Pitt's with Grenville only. Talked against love of character; on French Revolution, &c. Called at Beaufoy's—his absurd and affected religious tenets. 22nd. Saw Clarkson and other people on business. Afternoon to Spence's—he says that he gets from forty to fifty guineas per day."

"My dear Cookson," he writes from Palace Yard, "How are you? How is Mrs. C.? How is the bantling? Are you alive? Are you asleep? Are you disabled in your hands? Learn to write with your feet, ere you again let me be so long without hearing from you. I am not stationary here, but come up to put my slave business in train. My summer destination is unfixed. My dear little fellow, I hope you go on well in your parish. Don't waste your eye-sight and my own, in assuring me that it has not been from want of affection that you have omitted to write. I know you well enough to be sure of that. The reality I am persuaded will exist always, the appearance when I am separated from you never."

"23rd. Off for Teston—arrived there by dinner time. 'Amici fures temporis.'"—Carefulness as to his use of time had now become so habitual that he closely scrutinized even these seasons of friendly intercourse. "26th. Breakfast till late. Then with Sir Charles to Langley to eat cold dinner, see woods, fish-ponds, &c. Home in the evening. Days are wasted in these parties." And after another such excursion he says, "On looking at my expenditure of time I see it has been much wasted in this scheme, and unless when health or some real call renders it desirable, I will shun them in future." From Teston he returned through London into Derbyshire, and upon reaching Buxton on the 7th of August, was "met by a letter from Mr. Rose about the Spanish settlement, which half-inclined" him "to set off again for London."

Upon reflection, however, he determined to remain, and soon describes himself as "busily employed." "12th. Afternoon read Romeo and Juliet with Burgh, and agreed often to meet early in the afternoon, and read Shakespeare. 13th. I dined at Burgh's in order to avoid Pepper Arden, and read; but this scheme did not succeed. 14th. Rode with P. Arden, and had some serious talk. 16th. Off after breakfast for Castleton. The entrance and frontal of the cave immensely grand." Just as he was leaving Buxton, he was joined unexpectedly by a friend, whose society he highly valued. "W. Hey came in and surprised us. As my being here has brought him over, we resolve to stay a few days longer." "Went with W. Hey to see a young man who has had his foot amputated: no medical aid can be effectual. He seems pious and resigned. How thankful should we be for health!"

"27th. Being much in company on my birth-day, and on account of Henry Thornton's illness not being able to retire and spend it in private, that anniversary passed over with too little recollection. Oh may I from this time cultivate heavenly affections by mortifying the flesh, and living much in the view of unseen things, and may the Spirit of the Lord sanctify me wholly!" "I have been spending much time lately with W. Hey. May I profit from the example of that excellent man."

"Sunday, 29th. Service in the Long Rooms." "Those two good men," writes Mr. Hey to his own family, "whom I need not name, whose hearts are

always meditating some good scheme, intend to apply to the Bishop of Lichfield for leave to build a church here." "Serious talk with W. Hey in the afternoon; his profitable way of spending Sunday. 31st. With W. Hey to Ashborne, to meet Mr. and Mrs. Gisborne. On the road much serious talk with Hey, told him my greatest impediments, he recommended rules. Sat. 4th Sept. Off for a few days at Yoxall Lodge. Sorry to part with W. Hey; whilst with him I have allotted more time to conversation. He is indeed a most instructive and profitable companion. He complains of want of love to God, but his aim is high, his views elevated. 5th, Sunday. At breakfast, and on the way to and from church, idle talk, unfit to solemnize the mind or kindle the affections. Yet they are truly sincere and upright minds, all of them. 6th. Notification of election to stewardship of York races." To pass even a tacit censure upon this particular amusement, required no small measure of faith in the member for the county of York. There had been a time when he had recorded in his Diary, "My horse won at the Harrowgate races," but he was now convinced of their immoral tendency. His line therefore was clear, nor did he ever perceive that he had alienated one supporter by refusing at this time to fill the office, or by soon after exchanging the accustomed contribution to the races for a donation to the county hospital.

His thoughts were now fully occupied with the approaching marriage of his only surviving sister to

the Rev. Dr. Clarke, vicar of the Trinity church at Hull. This took place at Buxton upon the 11th of September. So warm were the natural affections of his heart, that his Diary contains many records of "restless nights," and "indifferent health," the result of anxiety for his sister's welfare. "I am sure," he writes to her friend Mrs. Hannah More, "you will be deeply interested in the event; though I am serious I cannot be uneasy concerning it." After a time, he set out with Mr. Babington for a short tour through Wales, whither Mr. Clarke and his sister had repaired; and joined their party at Caernarvon. "Sept. 27th. Hard at work—on Ferguson's Civil Society. 29th. With Babington and Miss Sykes to Beddgellert and Pont Aberglasslyn—returned evening—a grand scene. Welch Bibles and other serious books in a cottage. Oct. 1st. Off from Caernarvon—breakfasted Bangor—called on the bishop—he busy in his building, ornamenting the cathedral. Lamented the state of the Welch clergy, arising from monopoly—Bangor school may produce competition. Dined at Conway—evening Llanrwst. Sunday, 3rd. Llangollen—sorry to find no English service. Read prayers and sermon to servants at home, and the landlord came in. God be praised, this day was spent in the main, I trust, to his glory and my own edification. Babington an excellent man. Miss Butler and Ponsonby sent a civil note. We got off, I fear rather shabbily, without seeing them." "Our society," wrote Miss Sykes to her mother on the

following day,[1] "has received a sad blow in the departure yesterday of Mr. Wilberforce and Mr. Babington. The former you have long known and admired, and to me he appears truly angelic; had I a spark of enthusiasm about me, I should doubt whether he were not a superior being."

He was now upon his road to Yoxall Lodge, the seat of the Rev. T. Gisborne. Their college acquaintance had been interrupted when they left the University; but was afterwards renewed by a letter of inquiry from Mr. Gisborne, when he first saw the name of Wilberforce connected with the cause of Abolition. At Mr. Gisborne's house he had become well acquainted with his near connexion Mr. Babington. Intercourse between them soon grew into friendship; and for many years he made Yoxall Lodge, or Rothley Temple, his ordinary summer residence. Here he enjoyed uninterrupted privacy, combined with the domestic comforts of his friend's family. In these visits he fulfilled those intentions which constant company had defeated in his own residence at Rayrigg; and devoted ten or twelve hours every day to study. "I could bear testimony," writes Mr. Gisborne, "were such attestation needful, to his laborious unabated diligence, day after day, in pursuing his investigations on the Slave Trade, and in composing his invaluable work upon Practical Christianity." "Never," he has said, "was I in better

[1] Oct. 2, 1790.

spirits than when I thus passed my time in quiet study." He sallied forth always for a walk a short time before dinner, amongst the holly groves of the then unenclosed Needwood forest, where—

> "His grateful voice
> Sang its own joy, and made the woods rejoice."

"Often have I heard its melodious tones," says his host, "at such times, amongst the trees from the distance of full half a mile."

His object in his present visit to Yoxall Lodge, was to make himself completely master of the vast mass of evidence which had now been collected upon the subject of the Slave Trade. Throughout the summer his attention had never been withdrawn from this subject. "I shall make no apology," he wrote to Mr. Wyvill from Buxton, upon the 13th of August, "for putting into your hands the enclosed letter which I received this morning and beg you will return, and for desiring you to obtain and send me such information as you are able respecting the writer of it, to whom I am an utter stranger. It is necessary to be thus circumspect with regard to witnesses to be brought before our committee, because it would be injurious to our cause to bring forward men of bad characters: at the same time we should always recollect that, from the nature of the case, it is not to be expected that many persons, who have been or who are in the higher walks of life, will be either well affected to us, or at least will venture to step forth to assist us

with their testimony; and therefore we must content ourselves with persons, whose general conduct and estimation give us a right to contend for the veracity of their accounts."

It was absolutely necessary for the effectual conduct of the cause that he should be well acquainted with all the allegations of its advocates. To this work therefore he now applied himself. "Monday, 4th October. Off early from Llangollen—dined at Shrewsbury—begun to work at slave evidence with Babington." And on the following day, after entering his return with his accustomed "thank God, safely," he adds, "Nov. 5th. Babington and I determined to work hard at slave evidence. 6th. Hard at work—breakfast alone, and need not come down to supper. No kind of restraint. I must for a time defer my tract, because it is advantageous to read the evidence rapidly to detect inconsistencies." A letter of the 3rd to Mr. Hey of Leeds explains the reference in the preceding entry. "I have not advanced a single step since we parted at Buxton, in composing the little tract of which I then spoke to you. This is not owing however either to indolence, procrastination, or any alteration in my opinion of the utility of the work; but after mature consideration, I thought it right to make the slave business my first object, and ever since I have been at all stationary I have been labouring at it with great assiduity. Nor are my labours nearly finished; at which you will not wonder when I tell you, that besides

a great folio volume from the Privy Council, I have also to scrutinize with much care near 1400 folio pages of Evidence delivered before the House of Commons. My eyes are very indifferent, otherwise pretty well—I working like a negro."

The entries of his Diary show that in spite of the hinderance of infirm health, he rose to the necessities of the occasion. "Oct. 8th. Unwell. Hard work—slave evidence. 9th. Eyes bad. Hard at work. Monday, 11th. Slave evidence, and very hard at it with Babington all this week: wherein by God's blessing enabled to preserve a better sense of heavenly things than for some time before. 18th. Hard at work again—slave business. 19th. Psalms, Barrow, and slave evidence. 20th. Mr. and Mrs. Arden, and others dined here. E. profligate, or rather perhaps appeared so to me, owing to my having been with more serious people. This shows the effect of good company in producing tenderness of conscience; for much shocked at E. 26th. Sent for W. Smith and Dickson, to go on with West Indian evidence. 30th. Mrs. G. spoke to me to take care of myself—more exercise—I have been applying too closely—too little air—my health disordered—my appetite fails, &c. 31st. South, Barrow, Newcome, Psalms, slave evidence. Nov. 1st. New Testament, Psalms, slave business with Dickson and Whitaker—attacked evidence, &c. Continued to work very hard at the evidence all the week. Slept ill, not being well, partly through working too much. 5th. Heard

from Pitt that peace certain on our own terms. 11th. Staid in house hard at work. This is indeed a capital house for doing business. I am but moderate in health."

"I wish," he writes to Mr. Hey, "you would allow me the occasional use of some mild sedative. I am wakeful in bed, even when free from pain or disorder, if I have been reading or thinking in the evening; and I never sustain the loss of the nourishment and refreshment of sleep without feeling like a hunted hare all the next day, and being very unfit for any strenuous occupation."

"Mr. Wilberforce and Mr. Babington," writes a friend from Yoxall Lodge, "have never appeared down-stairs since we came, except to take a hasty dinner, and for half an hour after we have supped: the Slave Trade now occupies them nine hours daily. Mr. Babington told me last night, that he had 1400 folio pages to read, to detect the contradictions, and to collect the answers which corroborate Mr. W.'s assertions in his speeches: these, with more than 2000 papers to be abridged, must be done within a fortnight. They talk of sitting up one night in each week to accomplish it. The two friends begin to look very ill, but they are in excellent spirits, and at this moment I hear them laughing at some absurd questions in the examination, proposed by a friend of Mr. Wilberforce's. You would think Mr. W. much altered since we were at Rayrigg. He is now never riotous or noisy, but very cheerful, sometimes lively, but talks a good deal more on serious subjects than

he used to do. Food, beyond what is absolutely necessary for his existence, seems quite given up. He has a very slight breakfast, a plain and sparing dinner, and no more that day except some bread about ten o'clock. I have given you this history, as you say every thing about him must be interesting to you, and this is all I at present see of him."

Such were his occupations until his return to London in November. Throughout this time, with the exception of two days each of which yielded him eight hours of labour, he devoted daily nine hours and a half to his main employment. This was not the easy service of popular declamation on premises supplied by others, but the real conduct of affairs with all the toil and drudgery of careful preparation.

Upon the 9th he enters in his Journal, "Heard this evening that on Sunday morning, at Bath, died what was mortal of John Thornton." "He was allied to me by relationship and family connexion. His character is so well known that it is scarcely necessary to attempt its delineation. It may be useful however to state, that it was by living with great simplicity of intention and conduct in the practice of a Christian life, more than by any superiority of understanding or of knowledge, that he rendered his name illustrious in the view of all the more respectable part of his contemporaries. He had a counting-house in London, and a handsome villa at Clapham. He anticipated the disposition and pursuits of the suc-

ceeding generation. He devoted large sums annually to charitable purposes, especially to the promotion of the cause of religion both in his own and other countries. He assisted many clergymen, enabling them to live in comfort, and to practise a useful hospitality. His personal habits were remarkably simple. His dinner hour was two o'clock. He generally attended public worship at some church or episcopalian chapel several evenings in the week, and would often sit up to a late hour, in his own study at the top of the house, engaged in religious exercises."[2] "He died without a groan or a struggle, and in the full view of glory. Oh may my last end be like his!"[3]

On Thursday, the 18th of November, he left Yoxall Lodge, his two friends Mr. Gisborne and Mr. Babington bearing him company as far as Tamworth. The next day he reached London, and "plunging" (he writes) "at once into a dinner circle of cabinet ministers, how did I regret the innocent and edifying hilarity of the Lodge!" "Monday, 22nd. Went to Wimbledon—Dundas, Lord Chatham, Pitt, Grenville, Ryder. Much talk about Burke's book.[4] Lord Chatham, Pitt, and I seemed to agree, contra Grenville and Ryder. Kept up late, and unfit for prayer. 23rd. To town. Obliged to dine with Pitt—Robinson, Montague, Rose, Addington. Pitt told me of Grenville's peerage and the true reasons (distrust of Lord Thurlow). Saw Thurlow's letter in answer to

[2] MS. Mem. [3] Journal.
[4] Considerations on the French Revolution.

the news. Kept up till late. Oh how I regret Yoxall Lodge! Gave Pitt a serious word or two. 25th. Morning, Archbishop about a chaplain for Botany Bay. 26th. Read Burke's book for three hours—then to the House to be sworn. Had people to dine with me—then made calls. 27th. Called Beaufoy's. Breakfasted with Pitt, and lost time afterwards. Dined at home with Dickson. Slave work at night. 28th, Sunday. For want of a plan lost the value of this day sadly. 30th. Old Jewry, Slave Committee.

"Dec. 1st. Dined R. Smith's—Pitt, Long, Bayham, Dundas, Bankes—staid too long—came home heart-sick." "My heart cold in religious exercises. 2nd. My mind is distracted—I am embarrassed by too great a variety of objects. 3rd. Slave Committee. 10th. Muncaster advised me to take a forward and leading part in the House of Commons. 11th. Read and considered on the Convention business. Dined Lord Grenville's with a large mixed House of Commons party—rather showed off. 13th, Sunday. Lock—Scott—'God forbid that I should glory,' &c. Thought much on it, and I hope with benefit." "I have been lately tempted to vanity and pride. Many symptoms occur to my recollection. Pleased with flattery. To Pitt's, where a great circle of House of Commons chiefly on taxes, &c. Oh how foolish do they seem so to neglect heavenly things! 13th. Debate on Papers—spoke—kept late. 14th. Convention. 15th. Pitt's Budget. 16th. Debate on taxes, and my slave business put off

till after Christmas by Cawthorne and Pitt. I very angry, but too much I fear from wounded pride. 17th. Hastings' impeachment question. 22nd. House till past two—Pitt's astonishing speech."[5] "This was almost the finest speech Pitt ever delivered; it was one which you would say at once, he never could have made if he had not been a mathematician. He put things by as he proceeded, and then returned to the very point from which he had started, with the most astonishing clearness. He had all the lawyers against him, but carried a majority of the House mainly by the force of this speech. It pleased Burke prodigiously—'Sir,' he said, 'the right hon. gent. and I have often been opposed to one another, but his speech to-night has neutralized my opposition; nay, sir, he has dulcified me.'"[6]

"25th. Christmas day. I have just been receiving the sacrament, and I resolve by God's grace to lead a new life, walking in His ways; in His strength I must do it, for I am weak and helpless. I will try now as strict a course of temperance as my health will allow. At the Lock this evening—much disliked De Coetlegan.

"28th. Dined at Duke of M.'s. Many improper things said, which G. told me afterwards they were themselves regretting on my account.

"Jan. 6th, 1791. I have been but poorly of late. My business has been letters, New Testament, Gil-

[5] Maintaining that a pending impeachment is not terminated by a dissolution.

[6] Con. Mem.

pin's Lives, Horæ Paulinæ, Burke, and slave business."

Ever since his return to London, he had been employed in examining and arranging the evidence on behalf of Abolition. In the preceding summer he had compiled a table of questions with which Mr. Clarkson had set forth to collect all the evidence which could be procured in the northern counties. Several witnesses had been discovered in this journey. Mr. Wilberforce had himself obtained some others. One part of his present task was to select from them such as could give the most important information. To this was soon added a daily attendance upon the examinations till their close; and then a careful study and abridgement of the whole mass of evidence.

"Feb. 1st. Dined Lord C.'s—poor man, he very indifferent and feeble—said, 'I am as good a Christian as you,' in a way which showed that his mind was directed to serious objects. 2nd. House met after the recess. 4th. The renewal of the Slave Committee. 5th. Dined at Lambeth, with Speaker and Eliot—public day. Drove about with Speaker, then home to Storey and Clarkson. 7th. Began committee. 10th. Slave friends' day—Granville Sharpe and various evidences dined. 13th. Blessed be God for the Sunday. Scott—an excellent sermon—very serious thoughts. Held forth to my family as now usual on Sunday night. 15th. Slave Committee, &c. dined with me. W. Smith and Clarkson—slave business—then I went over to House. 16th. I went

to Sumner's to dine, and see Captain Hall, and prevail on him to give evidence, which succeeded. 18th. Pitt and a party dined with me." "24th. Breakfasted with Grant. Went to Holwood, where also Grenville and Ryder. 25th. Dundas added to the others. At Holwood all day. 26th. Rose and Steele vice Grenville—Finance committee—Ryder. 27th. To town."

"March 7th. I have lived much in company for the last fortnight, and kept late hours. My devotions have been much curtailed thereby; my business a labour to me." "Never was I more busy; besides the daily examinations of the Slave Trade witnesses, there are public and private letters, county matters, &c. Pray for me that I may preserve a sober mind and a single eye amidst all my distractions."[7] "I have lately heard of the deaths of many who seemed far more likely to live than I did. May these events be a warning to me. May I labour to do the work of my heavenly Father whilst it is day. My parliamentary and London winter should now begin as from a new era. Let me press forward with renewed alacrity. May the love of Christ constrain me."[8]

"March 18th. Appointed grand motion for 2nd of April, with a little management of Sir W. Young. I now resolve on as much diligent application to slave business as my health will allow; it must be my main object, although unhappily I am distracted by a variety of matters which I cannot quite neglect. The evi-

[7] Letters to W. Hey and Rev. W. Mason. [8] Journal.

dence was now almost completed, and he thus summons Mr. Babington to give his aid in the task of its abridgement.

"Without shame or remorse I call on you to assist us in epitomizing the evidence, of which a number or two will be despatched to you to-night, together with a few sheets of Dickson's doing, for a specimen; wherein you will be able to discern through the slashings and dashings, the original state in which he brought it to Eliot and Montagu, who look over it and expunge or alter at their pleasure. You may be allowed a little more discretion than Dickson, who is strictly ordered merely to reduce the scale, not to leave out any thing; but you must be very reserved in the exercise of it. The sooner you can return your work the better. In about a month I conceive I shall make my motion. Let me know how your engagements stand, that I may contrive to avail myself of your help whether in town or country. It is most likely indeed I shall myself retire to Clapham, or some such rural fastness." To Clapham he retired upon the 23rd of March, and "going to town as seldom as possible, and only upon very particular business to the House or elsewhere," he set hard to work writing and digesting the evidence. So incessant was this occupation, that on the eve of the ensuing debate, as upon one previous occasion, he judged it right to devote to his work of mercy that holy day upon which it is the ordinary privilege of the busiest Christian to rest from worldly cares. "Spent" (are his entries upon

these occasions) "Sunday as a working day—did not go to church—Slave Trade. Gave up Sunday to slave business—did business and so ended this sabbath. I hope it was a grief to me the whole time to turn it from its true purposes."

And now that the day approached, upon the event of which was suspended the welfare of his many unknown clients on the shores of Africa, and the success of his own toil and privations for four years of incessant labour, the prospect before him was by no means encouraging. In the year 1787, when he had undertaken the cause, its advocates looked confidently forward to the speedy suppression of the trade. Wherever the facts connected with its existence had been made known, a voice of indignation was raised against its guilt. In the beginning of 1788, "more difficulties" met the instructed eyes of Mr. Pitt and Mr. Wilberforce, yet still they deemed the cause prospering. "When these articles are properly authenticated before the Houses," writes Sir C. Middleton, (no sanguine calculator of national virtue,) in Jan. 1788, "I have little doubt of carrying absolute Abolition in the House of Commons, and such restrictions in the House of Lords as will amount to the same thing. Lord H. himself under such evidence will be ashamed to countenance the trade." Even when first assailed in the House of Commons, its only public advocates[9]

[9] Before this time indeed Stephen Fuller, agent for Jamaica, in memorials to Lord Hawkesbury and Sydney had indicated pretty plainly the state of colonial feeling: but this was only a private representation of their opinions.

were the two members who directly represented the African merchants. In the course however of that very session a more wide opposition made itself apparent. Its increasing strength was seen in the successive debates in both Houses of Parliament on the bill for regulating the middle passage; and when, in the spring of 1789, Mr. Wilberforce had given notice of his first motion for the entire suppression of the trade, it burst at once into a flame. It arose amongst the Guinea merchants; reinforced however before long by the great body of West Indian planters. Some few amongst them were from the first favourable to the suppression of the Slave Trade; but the great majority, though they declared it to be an English and not a West Indian trade, asserted that it was absolutely essential to the existence of their property.[10] It is the nature of such a defence of established enormities to yield at first to the generous assault, until gathering strength from the slow but certain succour of selfish apprehension, it retracts all its concessions and gains its former ground. The first burst of generous indignation promised nothing less than the instant abolition of the trade: but mercantile jealousy had taken the alarm, and the defenders of the West Indian system soon found themselves strengthened by the independent alliance of commercial men. Thus encouraged, they boldly assailed the public ear with

[10] Vid. the answers and correspondence of the agents to the islands of Jamaica, Grenada, St. Kitt's, &c. at the commencement of the Privy Council inquiries.

the depositions of their witnesses, who could paint as "promoted dances"[11] the enforced convulsions of the fettered negro; the hold of a slave ship,[12] "redolent with frankincense," as the scene of his happiest hours; whilst his landing in the colonies was an affecting meeting with long parted friends.[13] Seen through their

[11] Evidence of Mr. Norris. [12] Ibid.

[13] In a pamphlet, entitled "Apology for Negro Slavery," which passed through repeated editions, the writer, who speaks "from a long residence," says "it is a humane trade, preventing human sacrifices, and civilizing the people; neither is it very oppressive to the individuals." "To begin with a Guinea negro's arrival in one of our islands—He meets there near and dear relations. These agreeable and unexpected meetings are truly affecting, and excite the most tender and pleasing sensations in the by-stander," p. 22. It is singular that it should never have occurred to the writer, or the party by whom he was put forward, that this was at least an equivocal argument. If an improbable meeting in slavery was joyful, a certain separation in freedom must have been intolerable.

Amongst other arguments, Mr. Henniker actually revived Lambe's long since exploded forgery of a letter from the King of Dahomey to George II.

It is not beside our purpose to record, as briefly as possible, some of the arguments employed by the opponents of Abolition. The following is extracted from a pamphlet, named "Slavery no Oppression," then widely circulated. After a declamatory commencement, and an assault upon Quakers, Bishops, Cambridge University, and English ladies, as the causes and fomenters of their troubles, the writer proceeds —"It is well known, that the eastern and western coasts of Africa are inhabited by stupid and unenlightened hordes: immersed in the most gross and impenetrable gloom of barbarism, dark in mind as in body, prodigiously populous, impatient of all control, unteachably lazy, ferocious as their own congenial tigers, nor in any respect superior to these rapacious beasts in intellectual advancement, but distinguished only by a rude and imperfect organ of speech, which is abusively employed in the utterance of dissonant and inarticulate jargon. Such a people must be often involved in predatory battles, to obtain a cruel and precarious subsistence by the robbery and destruction of one another. The traffic has proved a fortunate event for their miserable captives." These extracts, besides illustrating the ordinary contradiction of the evidence offered in behalf of the Slave Trade, (as the prodigious population which subsisted by the precarious efforts of mutual destruction,) marks

peculiar medium, the Guinea trade[14] was a nursery for British seamen, whilst it delivered the grateful African from the refinement of native barbarity.

These accounts were confirmed by the votes and speeches of British officers, who were duped by inadequate personal observation, a most fallacious guide in such a state of society. This reproach of exaggerated charges justified the cautious doubts of men of business; whilst the general bias of the bar in favour of an established trade was confirmed by the defence which burst from the boisterous Thurlow, and for a moment trembled upon the lips of Erskine.[15] Such opposition could not fail of producing great effects. Though Mr. Pitt was a zealous abolitionist, the chancellor was not without support even in the Cabinet, where Lord Hawkesbury was thought ready to support stronger measures than he avowed in parliament. "Lord Hawkesbury's carriage," writes Lord Muncaster, "was a considerable time waiting at Lord Penrhyn's upon Saturday. Whether he was giving

the ground which was assumed early in the conflict, when the Abolitionists were compelled to establish by serious argument the equality of the negro species in generic organization.

[14] West Indian Evidence, passim. It was necessary in refuting this evidence, to show the mode of obtaining the slaves in Africa; the effect of the trade upon African manners; the cruelty of the mode of transport; the waste of life which it caused in the colonies; the possibility of maintaining the number of slaves on the West Indian estates by breeding; the injurious effects of the Guinea trade upon our own seamen; and the possibility of substituting for it a more advantageous as well as humane traffic. All these points the witnesses for the Abolition completely established.

[15] "The bar were all against us. Fox could scarcely prevent Erskine from making a set speech in favour of the trade." Con. Mem.

or receiving information you will be better able to decide than I."[16]

Mr. Fox, giant as he was, fought only with the strength of a single arm; while against him were arrayed, both in the House and in the provinces, his own political adherents, from Lord John Russell in the House of Commons to the Welch county member of whom Mr. Gisborne reports[17]—"He is a desperate Foxite; he would not open on the Slave Trade, which I hinted at as far as I could properly; but I fear he is too old, I believe I must add too covetous, to be likely to approve of Abolition." "These Utopian schemes of liberty in the Slave Trade . . " wrote Dr. Parr,[18] "alarm serious men." So far had such opinions prevailed, that in the months of April and May, 1789, the most unfavourable reports were forwarded to his country retreat, by Mr. Wilberforce's London correspondents. "They will come to-morrow" (writes Lord Muncaster) "to a short question, and feel themselves confident of success. In truth, amongst the various people to whom I have to-day spoken upon the matter, I have not found a single one at all inclined to go the length of immediate abolition. . . Reconsider, I conjure you, your plan. I do firmly believe if you persist, we shall find the West prove as fatal to the governing minister, and as subversive of all confidence and popularity, as the East has done formerly." "From the complexion of yesterday it appears to me that you will not make any effectual progress this year. The moment

[16] April, 1789. [17] June 26. [18] Works, i. 346.

they bring a single man to your bar they arrest you completely for this session. Immediate abolition will not go down in our House, and gradual will be stifled in the other."

The debate of the 12th of May gave, indeed, a short-lived promise of more successful progress. But delay was the secret of West Indian policy. They trusted to the strength with which caution, selfishness, and misrepresentation would recruit their ranks; and they were not deceived. The evil was distant and disputed; the sacrifice immediate and apparent. Self-interest was ever watchful, whilst the advocates of humanity sometimes slumbered on their post. "The affair goes on slowly in parliament, and with a more pertinacious and assiduous attendance of our adversaries in the committee than of our friends, except indeed Mr. Wilberforce, Mr. Smith, Sir. W. Dolben, and a few others; so that we cannot yet guess at the result."[19] The long protracted examinations of 1788, 1789, 1790, and 1791, though essential to final success, multiplied for a while the cold and cautious defenders of the trade. The temper, moreover, of events was most favourable to their endeavours. In the repose of peaceful times it is difficult to estimate aright the extreme agitation produced in our own political atmosphere by that hurricane of terror which desolated France. Revolution, which had made that people the fair promise of reasonable liberty, had before this time thrown off the comely

[19] Letter from Granville Sharpe, 17th March, 1790.

mask which concealed her hated features, and openly revelled in infidelity and blood. A small, though soon afterwards a noisy, party watched eagerly the convulsions of the neighbouring kingdom, and dreamed of renovating by French principles the English constitution; but the great bulk of the nation, exhausted by the war with America, and wearied by the strife of parties, viewed with horror the excesses of France, and recoiled with disgust from the abused names of humanity and freedom. Even the ordinary excitement of a general election could not rouse the nation from the political repose of 1790. Nor was it merely this general tendency to quiet which repressed the efforts of the Abolition party. The seed of French principles, which had been widely scattered throughout her foreign settlements, was already ripening into a harvest of colonial insurrection. The strife of Paris, renewed amongst the free inhabitants of St. Domingo, was soon transmitted thence to Dominica; and to the efforts of the true friends of peace were instantly attributed the intestine discords of an English colony.

Amidst such various elements of opposition Mr. Wilberforce approached the contest of April, 1791. Though none could be sanguine of immediate success, yet he was not without many cheering assurances of sympathy. "You, sir," writes Dr. Peckard, "will stand in the British parliament as did Episcopius in the infamous synod of Dort, with the whole force of truth, with every rational argument, and with all the powers of moving eloquence upon your side, and all to no

purpose." Still nearer to the actual conflict, he received an animating charge traced upon the bed of death by the faltering hand of the venerable Wesley.[20]

"Feb. 24, 1791.

"My dear Sir,

Unless the Divine power has raised you up to be as Athanasius contra mundum, I see not how you can go through your glorious enterprise, in opposing that execrable villany which is the scandal of religion, of England, and of human nature. Unless God has raised you up for this very thing, you will be worn out by the opposition of men and devils; but if God be for you who can be against you. Are all of them together stronger than God? Oh be not weary of well-doing. Go on in the name of God, and in the power of His might, till even American slavery, the vilest that ever saw the sun, shall vanish away before it. That He who has guided you from your youth up may continue to strengthen you in this and all things, is the prayer of,

Dear Sir,

Your affectionate servant,

JOHN WESLEY."

Such sympathy no doubt often cheered his spirit in the weary hours of thoughtful preparation. But it

[20] It seems probable that this was amongst the very last efforts of his pen. On the 25th February he sunk into that lethargy in which he lay until his death, upon the 2nd of March. It is docketted by Mr. Wilberforce "Wesley's last words."

was by a greater might that he was strengthened. He approached the combat strong in "truth" itself, and in "the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left." "May God," he writes in his private memoranda a few days before the contest, "enable me henceforth to live more to his glory, and bless me in this great work I have now in hand. May I look to Him for wisdom and strength and the power of persuasion, and may I surrender myself to Him as to the event with perfect submission, and ascribe to Him all the praise if I succeed, and if I fail say from the heart Thy will be done." "Motion put off," he adds a few days later, "from Tuesday, April 12th, to Monday, 18th, when most sadly unprepared, yet after trials to put it off came to House quite unmade up as to speech. By God's blessing got through pretty well to others' satisfaction, but very little to my own—I knowing how much omitted. Tuesday, 19th. Resumed debate and sadly beat." The speech with which he opened the debate reviewed the voluminous, and in some respects conflicting evidence, and with a careful suppression of irritating topics proved the trade to be as well cruel as impolitic. He also strongly pressed upon the House the mistake of that policy which proposed to leave the work of Abolition to the colonial legislature, showing that it was the loss of their present power of introducing new labourers which could alone make the improved treatment of their present stocks clearly profitable both to owners and their agents. He ended with an animated appeal

to the religious sympathies of the House. "But on every view it becomes Great Britain to be forward in the work. One half of this guilty commerce has been conducted by her subjects, and as we have been great in crime let us be early in repentance. There will be a day of retribution wherein we shall have to give account of all the talents, faculties, and opportunities which have been intrusted to us. Let it not then appear that our superior power has been employed to oppress our fellow-creatures, and our superior light to darken the creation of our God."

In the course of the debate he was earnestly supported by Mr. Smith and Mr. Fox; and Mr. Pitt, in establishing the needless injustice of the traffic, equalled any of those great efforts by which he confounded opposition. Two members had the courage to avow openly their altered[21] or established[22] sentiments. The opposition, headed by Lord John Russell and Colonel Tarleton, and well described in a speech of one of their own body[23] as the war of the pigmies against the giants of the House, consisted of little else than trite imputations of misrepresentation, or unsupported assertions of injury. Their cause was more effectually maintained by a multitude of silent votes, and the character talents and humanity of the House were left in a minority of 88 to 163. With this adverse decision all attempts to carry the question

[21] Mr. Stanley, member for Lancashire, who came into the House determined to vote against, and,

[22] The Hon. D. Ryder who came undetermined to vote for Abolition.

[23] Mr. Drake.

further in the House of Commons ended for this session. It had now become evidently necessary to appeal to the justice and humanity of the nation for that redress which was denied by the policy of parliament. Mr. Clarkson and Dr. Dickson were accordingly dispatched upon provincial tours for the purpose of disseminating widely an "Abstract of the Evidence" given before the House of Commons' committee, and "the Substance of the late Debate." "Went with Burgh," says the Diary on April 22nd, "to Clapham, where I staid all the ensuing week, putting off Holwood for it—dictating my speech for the report of the debate."

On the second of May parliament met again after the recess. "I left Clapham and came to stay in London—had much to do—many letters—saw much company as usual in Palace Yard. 3rd. Dined Duchess of Gordon's—children's ball talked of—oh what madness is all this! 4th. The quarrel between Burke and Fox, which I had endeavoured to prevent. 7th. Dined Duke of Montrose—a large party of our peculiar old friends—what a system are they on! 11th. Burke and Fox, further quarrel—much company this week also in Palace Yard. 22nd. I thank God that this town season is nearly over, I hope the next will be better. I am too apt to pursue general plans of usefulness without watching over my own heart. I must aim at more meditation, prayer, Scripture reading, solitude, and concern for the spiritual state of others (this last Milner's hint).

29th. Muncaster talked to me about going into D.'s situation until he has almost half persuaded me. Monday, 6th June. To town from Clapham upon business. Wrote the report of our society for enforcing the King's proclamation. 7th. General meeting of the society—read the report which I had been pushed to get finished—then to the Slave Committee.

The conclusion of the session now released him from a further stay in London. "I am afraid," he wrote to Mr. Babington,[24] "that even the mildness of your nature has been sharpened to exacerbation (as Dr. Johnson would term it) by my obstinate silence. But if so, it is rather a proof of your unreasonableness than of my criminality. . . This is the true mode of defence, to shift the war, like Tippoo, into the quarters of the enemy. . . However—behold me now upon my road to Bath, with Henry Thornton for my agreeable companion. We are snug and comfortable, but we would willingly increase our duet to a trio to admit your Honour. Now do not suppose that after being half choked, and smoked, and roasted in town, I am about to finish the work in Bath. To have grass up to my door after so long a parching of my heels on the pavement of London is not a luxury, but necessary for me. I have therefore leased a country house within reach of the Pump-room, and so shall enjoy the comforts of a beautiful country residence, whilst with the salubrious waters of King Bladud I am washing away the 'sordes' contracted in the course of a long session." It was

[24] June 11.

not merely from his delight in country scenes that he avoided Bath. The leisure hours which he thus secured, were devoted to reading and reflection. He was at this time engaged upon the "Bible, Robertson's India and America, Arabian Nights, Horsley's Charge and Letters, Bishop Taylor's Sermons, Rennel, Tavernier, Æsop, Bacon's Essays, Pope's Dunciad, Essay on Man, Epistles, &c. Asiatic Researches, Epictetus twice, Horace by heart." "Spent the morning," he says, "in serious reading, and much affected." "Read St. Paul's epistles attentively for two hours, I hope with profit. Christ is all; our fulness is from him." "I am reading much; thinking too little."

"My dear Muncaster," he wrote from Perry Mead,[25]

> "'If to her share some female errors fall,
> Look on her face, and you 'll forget them all.'

This was the effect of beauty; and that of friendship is somewhat similar. I was more than half angry with you, (I will tell you why some other time,) and had intended to scold; but no sooner do I set my face Muncasterwards than my features refuse their frown, and I can't help feeling and expressing a sensation of good-nature and complacency. My dear fellow, I hope you are well, and that you enjoy your family and your home, after having been so long separated from them.—And where, I hear you say, where is Perry Mead? It is situated in a country which, except in the article of water, comes not far behind Cumberland and Westmoreland themselves; close to Prior Park, and

[25] June 16.

about three quarters of a mile from the Pump-room There old Henry Thornton and I are lodged, and are leading a rational kind of life, and relishing not a little the quiet and retirement it allows us, after the bustle to which we have both been so long condemned. I have heard nothing of the worthy [26] who is the cause of your friendly solicitude, and I therefore begin to think that, by the prudent counsel of his advisers, he has laid aside his intentions: however I shall endeavour to place my peace of mind where nothing earthly can assail or molest it, and then, as Shakespeare says,

'Come what come may.'

"Henry Thornton will tell you that I offered to drive with him to Muncaster Hall, previously to our drenching with Bath water. Whether or not I shall be able to look in on you this recess I know not, but if I can spare the time, I assure you very sincerely it will give me very great pleasure to shake you by the hand in your own house, and roam over your wild hills. Independently of my regard for the inhabitants, I have an affection for the country of Westmoreland and Cumberland, which makes me always hail the sight of them, and quit them with reluctance. Adieu, Adieu... Read my books... I am over head and ears, plunged in letters to which I owe answers, and my eyes are bedusted and weak, but I could not defer writing to you. Kind remembrances to Lady Muncaster

I am ever affectionately yours,

W. WILBERFORCE."

[26] Captain Kimber.

Here he spent about a month, and refusing all invitations to dine out enjoyed at home the society of a few chosen friends, the chief amongst whom were Mr. Henry Thornton, Mr. Grant, and Mr. Eliot. To the house of Mr. Eliot at Burton Pynsent, he made an excursion upon the 30th of June. "Set off early for Eliot's. Dined with G.'s friend. I must beware of this sort of old bachelor's life. G. sadly taking God's name in vain."[27] To any of his friends who had contracted this irreverent habit, he made a practice of addressing by letter his most serious admonitions; and he has often said that by this custom he never lost, and but once endangered the continuance of a friendship. "I wrote to the late Sir ——, and mentioned to him this bad habit. He sent me in reply an angry letter, returning a book that I had given him; and asking for one he had given me. Instead of it I sent him a second letter of friendly expostulation, which so won him over, that he wrote to me in the kindest tone, and begged me to send him back again the book he had so hastily returned."[28] Got to Pynsent at night—old Lady Chatham a noble antiquity—very like Lady Harriet, and the Pitt voice. July 1st. At Burton all day. Walked and talked with Eliot. Lady Chatham asked about Fox's speaking—is much interested about politics—seventy-five years old, and a very active mind. 2nd. Off betimes for Cowslip Green—arrived there by the afternoon—Henry Thornton came at night.

[27] Journal. [28] Con. Mem.

3rd, Sunday. Early for Shipham; where church, and one hundred and fifty children. On to Chedder, where Mrs. Baber's reception—her sudden turning her joy into a right channel, and calling on the children to sing 'Praise God, from whom all blessings flow,' much affected me. Church—catechising—sermon read, and Mrs. Baber's moving address. The Miss Mores are indeed excellent women, and it seems as if God would prosper their benevolent intentions. 4th. Not feeling that it would be right to leave them, we staid one more day. D. consulted me about a vow—I advised strongly against it. Oh how ashamed am I made to feel by finding what is thought of me, and how little I really correspond with it! 5th. Off betimes to breakfast with *friend* Wright at Bristol, where Mr. Harford met us. He says that the Slave Trade is growing disgraceful. Saw old Dr. Stonehouse, who applauded G. Whitefield. . . Lord Chesterfield charmed with him. Home to Perry Mead by dinner time. 23rd. Heard from Henry Thornton, and pressed by Clarkson to come up to town about Sierra Leone business."

The Sierra Leone Company had been founded after the loss of the Abolition question in the course of this spring. It was a trading company, formed by the advocates of Abolition with no expectation of mercantile advantage, but with a view to extend our lawful commerce with Africa, to commence her civilization, and so confute in the most convincing manner, all those arguments for the Slave Trade, which were drawn from the alleged intellectual peculiarities

of the negro race. With this view Mr. Wilberforce took a forward part in its establishment, and consented to act as one of its first directors. "When you first mentioned the scheme to me," wrote long afterwards one of its early members, "you most earnestly represented to me the uncertainty of its turning out a profitable concern; that possibly it might be the reverse; and you pressed me very much not to subscribe to it with that view. I requested you not to give yourself any concern on that point, as I considered its principal object to be the abolition of the Slave Trade."[29]

"Monday, 28th July. Off betimes on Sierra Leone business—reached Sandleford (M. Montagu's) in the evening, where Dr. Beattie was already arrived. 26th. Off after breakfast—dined at the Speaker's, and staid all night. Speaker will consider of Sunday levee's transfer to Saturday. 27th. Arrived in town. To H. Thornton's—Sierra Leone meeting. Then to Dundas on business, and to Hampstead with Pitt. Dined, and all night. 28th. After breakfast explained a little to the Master of the Rolls and Lady A.—then to town. Dined alone, and off to Clapham to see W. Smith—he gone to Birmingham about the riots. 29th. To Fulham, Bishop of London's—where all night. Much talk with the Bishop. 30th. To town—Sierra Leone meeting. Then to Holwood—Pitt and Grenville there. 31st, Sunday. Pitt and Grenville went to town. To Holwood chapel, and afternoon Beckenham church. Home to

[29] Letter from G. Lloyd Esq. to W. Wilberforce Esq. Jan. 21, 1807.

dinner—Pitt and Grenville. Aug. 1st. Heard from H. Thornton about Sierra Leone governor and chaplain, and came to town. 2nd. Meeting on Sierra Leone business, morning and evening, till eleven o'clock at night. Dined and slept at H. Thornton's —Riou, Grant, Sir C. Middleton, dined."

"My dear sir," writes Mr. Wilberforce to Mr. Wyvill,[30] "one would almost think we were a couple of Spaniards, who, each conceiving it would be a disparagement of his dignity were he to write first, should both remain silent to their mutual mortification. Be this as it may, I can hold no longer—though in truth my object is not so much to discharge the contents of my own budget, which is so full, and full of such active matter, that I shall keep the strings close tied, lest, if it were to be opened ever so little, the whole might break forth irresistibly; but to draw from yours an account how you and your family are going on... I thank God I am myself as comfortably well as usual; unequal to any great exertions, but in some measure able to produce the effects of them by smaller repeated efforts, and a good deal of care. I was called up to London on the business of the Sierra Leone Company: a new institution, to the nature and object of which I presume you are no stranger. If, as I conceive will be hereafter the case, we enlarge our numbers, would you like to become a member? I should introduce you with great pleasure. The design is noble, the management, at present at least, in excellent hands, and I

[30] Aug. 8.

trust it will please God to bless the undertaking, and conduct it to a prosperous issue.

Believe me always
Very affectionately yours,
W. WILBERFORCE."

In the discussions which he now attended the plans of the future company were formed. It was carefully fostered by Mr. Wilberforce, and long engrossed the time and energies of his friend Mr. Henry Thornton. And though this is not the place in which to enter upon the eventful history of the colony,[31] less must not be said, than that ever since its foundation it has signally advanced the cause of Abolition, and still affords the fairest promise of at last removing that deadly curse which the Slave Trade has entailed upon the whole western coast of Africa.

He was now arranging his movements for the summer. It has been stated that he had no residence on his landed property, and therefore was not summoned into Yorkshire by the ordinary duties of a country gentleman; and though upon all great occasions, when he thought his presence might be useful, he repaired to York, he never visited the county to maintain an interest. "I must mention," he has said, "the uncommon kindness and liberality which I experienced from my constituents. In former times the county members displayed their

[31] This may be found at length in the Life of Granville Sharpe, by Prince Hoare, Esq.

equipages annually at the races, and constituted a part of the grand jury at the summer assizes; the latter, indeed, I should have been glad to attend, but for the unseemly festivities which commonly take place at that period. I was not, however, wanted; the number of gentlemen of larger fortune in the county were far more than sufficient to constitute a most respectable grand jury, both at the spring and summer assizes. I could not consistently with my principles frequent the theatre and ball room, and I knew that I should give offence by staying away were I actually at York; but no discontent was ever expressed at my not presenting myself to the county on these occasions. My friends appeared tacitly to admit my claim to the command of my own time during the recess."[32] The requirements of his singular position demanded this immunity from ordinary cares. And he considered himself as best fulfilling his duty towards his constituents, when he was most diligently qualifying himself to watch over their interests with effect. To give himself more entirely to these great objects, he devolved upon one or other of his friends the management of his property, which was kindly undertaken at different times by Mr. R. Smith and Mr. Henry Duncombe.

"My dear Wilberforce," writes Mr. Duncombe at this time,[33] "I am sorry to interrupt your repose, to inform you that you have an estate in Yorkshire, that that estate is out of lease yearly, and that before you

[32] MS. Notes. [33] July 18.

let it again, you ought in prudence to be acquainted with its value and its circumstances. Send therefore your steward to me." "Heard," says his Diary somewhat later, "of Duncombe's excellent settling of the Markington estate, and very thankful that all the old tenants are preserved." "Went on to look at my land: my land just like any one else's land." Nor was it only in the saving of his time that he profited by this unsolicitous life; it tended also to keep his thoughts and affections free from the ordinary entanglements of his rank and station. "When I was a single man," he has said, "I used to find a pleasure in the thought, that I lived only in a hired house; for I was thus continually reminded, that I was not in truth at home." The country houses of many friends were open to him, and to some of these he repaired every summer, until his marriage.

"My dear Babington," he wrote from London,[34] "I have written to Gisborne, and have told him I will call at the Lodge just when it will suit them. I understand he is rather more uncertain than you whether he can take me in, having taken the precaution of unroofing his house. He has not even the merit of originality, for it is an old expedient for turning out an unwelcome occupier; and the transfer from that to keeping me out is easy. I think with much pleasure on our approaching meeting; but I have a surmise about my plans whilst living with you, which I will mention without reserve. I should hold it a breach of

[34] July 22.

friendship, if we were to stand ever so little upon ceremony." "My mysterious annunciation," he writes to the same friend a few days later, "which appears to have caused you some mirth, was this, that I am cogitating how far when I house myself with a man for months together, it may not be a proper part of my system to consider myself as living in the same street, but not as in the same house; dining with him occasionally, but not every day. But we shall have time enough to talk of this and other megrims. My object is the perusal of certain books, of which one ought not to be ignorant, but which are too slight and unsubstantial to be put to any other use than this of garnishing dishes.

Ever yours,

W. WILBERFORCE."

Upon the 5th of August, accordingly, he reached Rothley Temple, the seat of Mr. Babington, and enters his determination "to be as diligent whilst here as I can be, consistently with health, and to cultivate in prayer, and reading Scripture, through the help of the Spirit of Christ, the graces of the Christian temper." "It pleased God to give me this morning an affecting sense of my own sinfulness, and a determination to live henceforth, by his grace, more to his glory." "Cold at first, yet moved afterwards by a sense of heavenly things, and determined to go to the important work of self-examination, and to set about a thorough change. Henceforth I purpose, by God's

grace, to employ my faculties and powers more to his glory; to live a godly, diligent, useful, self-denying life. I know my own weakness, and I trust to God alone for strength."

The whole of this autumn, which was spent in visiting different friends, he devoted to diligent study. "Aug. 24th. I mean to apply to public speaking preparation. Busy in reading English history with Babington." So earnest was he now in application, that in their daily walks the two friends continued their study, one of them reading aloud whilst his steps were guided by the other. "Delightful weather," he says at this time,—"reading Rapin out of doors." The nature of his occupations may be gathered from his list of subjects on his first establishment at Rothley Temple. "Bible, English History, Fenelon's Characters: Horace, by heart." . . The notes and references in his own hand, with which the copy he now used abound, especially throughout the Satires and Epistles, testify the care and diligence with which he studied. . . "Cicero de Oratore, Addison's Cato, Hume, Hudibras, Pilgrim's Progress, Doddridge's Sermons, Jonathan Edwards, Owen, *Letters*." This last head occupied a large portion of his time. "My letters," was in later life his declaration, "are as much *my* bane as conversation was that of Mackintosh; yet how can I prevent it?"—Without giving up a peculiar mode of usefulness he could not, for he had become early a marked man, whose advice and assistance, both in charity and

business, were eagerly sought for by the doubting and the distressed. Add to this, that it was essential to his usefulness that he should keep up intimate communications with those who in various districts could influence society, or report to him the facts which marked its temper; so that though his large correspondence diminished the apparent fruit of his exertions, it was itself one of his most effective modes of usefulness.

"Aug. 25th. Dined," he says, "from Rothley Temple with Sir. C.—no grace—and people ruined by fashion. 28th. Henry Thornton returned to us from Wales. Prayed this evening with some earnestness. Religious conversation with B.—he is an excellent man, and far more sober-minded than I am. 29th. In pain all to-day. Thought too much of my sufferings, and am not thankful enough to God for all his mercy. My sister and friends kind and tender in the extreme. I find when I am ill that I cannot attend to serious things: this should be a warning to me to work whilst it is day. Oh may I still press forward! Religion is still too much a toil to me, and not enough of a delight. I am shortly going into a scene of great temptation: oh may I be preserved from infection, and so conduct myself as to glorify my Father which is in heaven. Set off, Sept. 20th, with my mother and sister for H. My mother extremely warm for church and state. On the road read Hume and dictated. 21st. Arrived at H. by three o'clock —an interesting conversation on religion with Dr.

Oliver. I am apt to be too polemic in arguing with him and H. on points of divinity and morals. I have too little serious and humble desire to serve them, and too much desire of victory in debate. Remember the character of the wisdom that is from above, pure, peaceable, and gentle. I must aim at less volatility and more internal self-possession in company with a gay exterior. 22nd. I find my mind liable to be intoxicated with the comfort and grandeur of this scene. Oh may God enable me to preserve a steady, heavenly-minded frame! All here breathes a spirit of proud independence, quite different from Babington's. 23rd. Read Witherspoon's sermon upon the World crucified to Believers, and much affected by it. Oh may it be to some purpose. But how soon do good impressions evaporate! How have I been at times intoxicated by the external comforts of the scene around me, instead of feeling thankful that I am not exposed to them! 17th. Went to town with a view to Sierra Leone business, and for advice. 28th. At Henry Thornton's, Clapham, but so unwell that I could not call on Pitt. Grant dined, and King Naimbana's son. 29th. Better, though still ill. Sierra Leone meeting all morning. Dined Pitt's with Grenville and Pybus. He very kind and glad to see me. At night returned to H. Thornton's. 30th. Grant an excellent man of business. Returned to H. to a late dinner.

"Oct. 1st. Since I have been here I have not maintained sufficiently a grateful sense of God's

presence at meals, or watched enough for proper conversation. What mercies am I continually receiving! how ought they to melt my heart and spur me on to duty! Found much opportunity of reading; almost as much as at Gisborne's. Went with Miss L. Smith to Theobald's. Still unwell 2nd. Morning to Dr. Law's church—afternoon Tring church. W. Smith came to dinner, and went away at night. Some religious talk; but too disputatiously—but a bad Sunday. 7th. Travelling to Forncett—read Hume and thought over topics pretty diligently—seventy-six miles—arrived about seven. Newmarket races. Oh what folly, what forgetfulness of God: Sunday, 9th. Before and this morning much serious talk with Cookson. He laments the deadness of his parish—seems truly bent on his important work. God bless and prosper him. I encourage him to persevere with renewed alacrity, and to hope for the best in God's good time. They attend him at church better than his neighbours. Spent much time in discussing with him; meaning to make only a short stay with him, and coming for this very purpose. 10th. Travelling all day to H.—pretty diligent. 13th. Off early for London. Read all the way there—then at Sierra Leone business till four o'clock, and again till past eleven at night. 14th. Sierra Leone business. 15th. Read Adam Smith. Dined Pitt's—Mornington, Eliot, and Grenville. They talk much of Burke, particularly Grenville—and against La Fayette, who rather defended by Pitt. Refused to go to Holwood that I

might have Sunday quiet." This occasional retirement he found of especial service in maintaining the simplicity of his spirit. "Often in my visits to Holwood," he has said, "when I heard one or another speak of this man's place, or that man's peerage, I felt a rising inclination to pursue the same objects; but a Sunday in solitude never failed to restore me to myself."[35]

"17th, Monday. Grant dined with us at H. Thornton's, and we discussed Sierra Leone. 18th. Meeting of directors at H. Thornton's. Dined there together, and sat evening till late. 19th. Public meeting of directors at King's Head—true specimen of a public meeting. Lushington's loquacity; but a very sensible clear man. 20th. Directors at H. Thornton's all morning. Went to dine with Grenville—Mornington, &c. Returned to meeting at Thornton's, where only excellent Granville Sharpe. All the directors almost seem earnest, and some very worthy men. 21st. Left town on the road to Gisborne's, which reached safely next evening—thank God. 24th. I resolve now on as much business as my health will allow. Including all sorts I hope ten hours a day at least on the average. More thinking and composing—Modern Europe, De Lolme, Bible and Testament. To think over political and constitutional topics, and discuss them with Gisborne, and less time therefore for reading. 25th. Clarkson called—warned him

[35] Con. Mem.

about French Revolution. My religious frame is too cold, and I do not bring these things home to my heart so readily, cheerfully, and naturally as I ought. Oh may times mend with me in this! God is gracious. Be sober and watch unto prayer. 27th. The Dean of Lichfield called—I gave up an hour or more to conversation, &c. in hopes of a church at Buxton.

"4th November. Going on diligently and comfortably in mind, yet too little of the Christian spirit. My chief employment has been thinking over and writing down thoughts on constitutional and political topics. Reading, with view to discussion, Ward's Dialogues, De Lolme, Modern Europe—serious, the Bible. I talk over political and constitutional topics with Gisborne. 8th. Going on as usual in business—too carelessly, yet not without many resolutions of amendment, and some warm devotional feelings. When shall I be able to amend thoroughly? 10th. Dined at ——'s at Lichfield, Buxton church in view. These meetings are sad work—we practise such hums upon one another. How little do we talk like passengers who are hastening to a better country, and here are in a strange one! Oh may God enable me to preserve a constant and a sober mind with a gay exterior. Sunday, 13th. I thank God that for the most part I was much impressed with a sense of serious things, and resolved anew; yet how weak am I in performance!"

These resolutions are of the most strictly practical complexion, and are evidently the results of habitual

watchfulness. " May God, for Christ's sake, enable me to serve Him from a genuine principle of evangelical obedience. I will labour after a sense of God's presence, and a remembrance that I have been redeemed, and so am not my own. More fixedness in devotion, reading Scripture, and self-examination —greater self-restraint in lawful things, both in thought and act. Little secret self-denials, without much thought. More real gratitude to God at meals, and when enjoying other comforts—kind friends, and all external conveniences. In company—rational conversation and innocent mirth. Topics prepared—what good can I do or get—draw out others when I can without feeding their vanity—above all aim at their spiritual good—think for each of them. Truth to be observed strictly. General kindness and mildness, especially towards inferiors—beware of vanity and evil speaking. Frequent aspirations in solitary relaxation—recapitulate or revolve topics, or at least avoid rambling, wandering thoughts. In every thing, according to its measure, you may please or displease God. Nov. 14th. Resumed my labours according to the same plan—thinking and dictating on topics—getting by heart—history—letters—serious, Bible. 16th. With Gisborne to Wedgwood's—Etruria, got there to dinner—three sons and three daughters, and Mrs. W.—a fine, sensible, spirited family, intelligent and manly in behaviour—situation good—house rather grand, and all conveniences. Pictures, &c. Discussed all evening. 17th. Returned to the Lodge.

20th. I have been reading Sir M. Hale's life. What a man was he! and why may not I love God as well and render to Christ as gratefully? Monday, 21st. Resumed work; but a bad day with me, and heavy in spirit; though a little roused by Witherspoon. 27th, Sunday. Cold at first rising, afterwards earnest—serious thoughts and fervent prayer; and now I most seriously resolve to turn to God with my whole heart. I have been reading Doddridge's life. What a wonderful man! Yet I may apply to the same Saviour. I propose henceforth to try at eleven hours of all sorts of business one day with another whilst in the country; nine hours of which to be exclusive of 'serious.' 28th. Got up after too short a night, and stupid in consequence through the day. I was too forgetful to-day of my regulations, yet rather warm in devotions at night. 29th. Not so inattentive as I often am; yet, alas, how little what I ought to be!"

From Yoxall Lodge he wrote to Mr. Pitt,

"My dear Pitt,

I shall really be greatly obliged to you if you will relieve me from a just cause of uneasiness, by doing something for Mr. John Hawarth, the poor man I have so often plagued you about, who sold out of the army in order to pay his father's debts. I know the impediments and difficulties that are even in your way in these cases, and therefore it is a rule with me never to give hopes, except the object appears actually almost in possession.

"But in this instance, the poor fellow was so modest, and he had been dangling so long, that thinking, in consequence of what you told me, something would soon turn up, I could not help reviving him when he seemed ready to faint, and by so doing I have unintentionally kept him in suspense nine months more. I trust you will consider his past situation, and his tedious state of expectation, and remember also that I advised him to refuse a place of about £70 a year, as being too degrading for a gentleman; a man also who writes well, &c. Excuse my boring you. I assure you I have long been pushing back my own reflections, before I could be brought to it.

"Another thing in Sir F.'s medium of connexion—The enclosed I was forced to promise to forward to you, but I expressly guarded against any inferences that might be drawn from my so doing. I believe the author of the proposal is going to Sierra Leone.

"And now, after having transacted my business with the *minister*, a word or two to the *man*—a character in which, if it is more pleasant to you to be addressed, it is, I assure you, no less pleasant to me to address you. I wish you may be passing your time half as salubriously and comfortably as I am at Gisborne's, where I am breathing good air, eating good mutton, keeping good hours, and enjoying the company of good friends. You have only two of the four at command, nor these always in so pure a state as in Needwood Forest; your town mutton being apt to be woolly, and your town friends to be interest-

ed: however, I sincerely believe you are, through the goodness of Providence, better off in the latter particular, than has been the fate of ninety-nine ministers out of a hundred; and as for the former, the quantity you lay in may in some degree atone for the quality; and it is a sign that neither in friends nor mutton you have yet lost your taste. Indeed I shall reckon it a bad symptom of your moral or corporeal state, as the case may be, when your palate is so vitiated, that you cannot distinguish the true from the false flavour. All this is sad stuff, but you must allow us gentlemen who live in forests to be a little figurative. I will only add, however, (that I may not quite exhaust your patience,) that I hope you will never cease to relish *me*, and do me the justice to believe the ingredients are good, though you may not altogether approve of the cooking.

Yours ever,

W. WILBERFORCE.

"P. S. Remember me to all friends. I hope you have no more gout, &c. If you will at any time give me a line, (though it be but a *mouthful,)* I shall be glad of it. You will think me be-Burked like yourself."

On the 7th of December he went, "with snow upon the ground," to the house of his cousin Mr. Samuel Smith, at Wilford; where he met "at dinner Gregory the astronomer, a well-informed man, with a high sense of the ludicrous." On the 13th he again

returned to Yoxall Lodge, and contrasting his own homeless state with the welcome which awaited the return of his host, he describes himself as "glad to see my friends again, and felt sadly the want of wife and children to hail my return; yet looked up to heaven as the true object of desire.—Received a most affecting letter from Milner about his brother. 14th. At night Henry Thornton and Grant came in suddenly. 15th. At work on Sierra Leone business most of the day. H. Thornton has been at it the whole day for some months. 16th. Worked at Sierra Leone business preparing the Report." "It lately occurred to me," he writes from Yoxall Lodge to Mr. Wyvill, "that you might probably like to be concerned in what, considering all the circumstances, I must call the splendid plan for establishing a settlement on the coast of Africa. I therefore directed the last Report to the court of proprietors to be transmitted to you from London: this I believe will give you ample information, added to what you must have already obtained from the newspapers, concerning the general nature and intentions of our institution. I need only add, that it has been since resolved to raise the capital to £150,000, and that the accounts we have received from our agent, both of the number and qualities of the Nova Scotia negroes, are extremely pleasing. I dare say we shall be in no want of subscriptions.

"P. S. When I dictated the sentence respecting the Nova Scotia negroes, I thought an account of them had been given in the Report, but as in since glancing

my eye over the pages I see no mention of it, it may be proper to be a little more particular. The negroes here referred to formerly inhabited the southern provinces of the United States, and having sided with us during the war, and being consequently obnoxious to the Americans, they were, as a reward to their loyalty, transported to the genial climate of Nova Scotia, where they have been ever since in a most deplorable way: besides the rigours of a climate so ill adapted to their constitutions, they were very ill treated in other respects, the land promised them was not given, &c. Sir H. Clinton spoke to me himself concerning them, and bore testimony to their claim on the protection and good offices of this country. These poor people hearing a confused report of an intended settlement on the coast of Africa, sent one of their number about a year ago to London to inquire into the truth of it, and to request, if it should seem expedient to him, that government would transport them thither. We took up the cause, and administration sent out orders accordingly. We expect about seven hundred men, women, and children will come over to Sierra Leone, with our agent this or the next month; and there is every reason to hope they will form a most valuable acquisition. You understand they are all free people."

CHAPTER. IX.

DECEMBER 1791 TO DECEMBER 1792.

Return to London—Death of Miss Bird, and letter to Manning—Petitions against Slave Trade—Proposal to abstain frem West India produce—Cause of Abolition impeded by events in St. Domingo and in France—Pitt suggests postponement—Motion lost—Dundas's resolutions for gradual Abolition—Violence of Slave Traders—Kimber—Stay at Bath—Letters from Dundas and Pitt—Walmer Castle—Residence at Battersea Rise—Society.

Mr. Wilberforce's quiet stay at Yoxall Lodge was suddenly disturbed by a summons from his friend Henry Thornton, on the evening of the 16th Decr. "All my friends considered my case, and at last gave it for my accompanying Grant and Henry Thornton to town. I scarce honest about it from my disinclination to go, yet God's providence calls me away."[1] On the morning of the 17th ("leaving papers and every thing at sixes and sevens, and having lost an occasion of talking seriously to —") he set off for town, whence he wrote again to Mr. Wyvill—"You will be surprised to receive a letter from me dated London, so soon after

[1] Diary.

my last from Yoxall Lodge, but on Thursday night last I was suddenly summoned to town on the Sierra Leone business, and, though very reluctantly, I of course obeyed." "All this week," he says, "at Sierra Leone business, and therefore staid in the city with H. Thornton. Went one day to dine with Pitt—met V. who seems rather more worldly. Grant with us always at Thornton's—chosen director on Tuesday.

"Sunday, Jan. 1st, 1792. Came to Palace Yard to-day, having been at H. Thornton's, King's Arms Yard a fortnight. A better Sunday than some past—I trust that I have been sincerely affected. Cecil's in the evening, and went over the sermon afterwards to my family. I have been to-day receiving the sacrament, and looking back upon the last year, and I desire now to be enabled to purpose stedfastly to lead a new life. I have been in a hurry of business since I came to town, and short in my devotions. All my resolutions for the future must be vain without the help of God; yet relying on it, and labouring to strengthen the main principle, I will strive to keep such rules as seem proper in my situation." "I thank God," he says in his private Journal of Jan. 4th, "I have been in rather a more watchful, sober frame of mind, than for some time past. I pray God it may continue. How much room is there still for more watchfulness! yet I trust that I am mending."

The hurry and interruptions of his London life were now begun. "Jan. 7th. Out in the morning—employed all day. W. Smith called in the afternoon.

I talked to him on religion, but too much as a matter of criticism. 10th. City—Sierra Leone; and afternoon slave business. Then Henry Thornton's, where discussed, and home late; Grant our associate. I find that I can hardly keep an account of time. 11th. Dined R. Smith's—Pitt, Dundas, &c. I staid late. 12th. Sierra Leone Company, morning. Pitt, Montrose, Grenville, Attorney-General, &c. dined with me. Day cheerful—but too many trifling thoughts. 16th. Busy all the morning—dined Bishop of London's. Returned home to serious reading, but too coldly. 18th. Queen's birth-day—at St. James's. Dined at Pitt's—sadly idle. What stuff such a day as this is! 21st. Went tête-à-tête with Pitt to Wimbledon—finance lecture on the way. A long discussion with Dundas after dinner—a most excellent man of business. Oh what a pity that he is not alive to what is best! his diligence shames me."

In entering upon this distracting scene he did not forget the resolutions of greater watchfulness with which he had closed his last London season. "I will watch and pray," he says, "or God may punish my carelessness by suffering me to fall a prey to sin." Christ says, through His apostle, 'Be not conformed to this world.' Do Thou teach me, Lord, the true limits of conformity. I have been hearing a most excellent sermon from Mr. Scott, on procrastination. I was very cold and sluggish in spiritual affections both yesterday and this morning, but I hope this discourse has roused me; may I be enabled to put in practice

these most important admonitions. I have much cause for humiliation in the past week; yet I think I go on better in my own house than in Henry Thornton's, from having more quiet; and I humbly resolve to press forward, and apply diligently to the throne of grace, that Christ may be made to me wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." To Mr. Mason, whom Dr. Burgh describes[2] "as entertaining paternal feelings towards you, which have received an accession from your late kind attention to him," he writes soon after his return to London—"To you, who know Yoxall Lodge, and can by the utmost stretch of your imagination form to yourself some idea of *my* London, I need hardly say how I feel the change; yet I trust I am on my post, and in that persuasion I determine not to abandon it. I endeavour as much as I can to preserve my Needwood Forest mind in my Palace Yard habitation, and whilst I am in the busy and the social circle, (and I will confess to you the latter is to me the more laborious and dangerous service of the two,) I labour, looking to a better strength than my own, to discharge the duties of this life, from a regard to the happiness of the other, and from a sentiment of gratitude towards Him to whose undeserved mercy alone I can look for its attainment. I will not be so affected as to offer any apology for exhibiting this picture of my mind; on the contrary, I am persuaded you will rather thank

[2] Jan. 2.

me for it, accepting it as a proof of the cordiality and affection with which I am,

Very sincerely yours,

W. WILBERFORCE."

But although he watched over himself thus diligently, and withdrew from all superfluous intercourse with society, "dining from home less than in former years, and giving fewer dinners, either ordinary or formal, upon Milner's persuasion;" yet his wakeful eye detected some injury to his spirit from his continual engagements. "Both my body and mind suffer from over-occupation. My heart is now in a cold and senseless state, and I have reason to adore the goodness of God in not hardening me. I have been short, and cold, and wandering in private devotions. Habit and the grace of God preventing me have kept me in a decent observance of external duties, but all within is overgrown with weeds, and every truly Christian grace well nigh choked. Yet, O Thou all-merciful Father, and Thou Saviour of sinners, receive me yet again, and supply me with strength. Oh let me now quicken the things that are ready to die! My worldly connexions certainly draw me into temptations great and innumerable, yet I dare not withdraw from a station in which God has placed me. Still let me deal honestly with myself in this matter, and if, on further trial, I find reason to believe I ought to lead a more sequestered life, may I not dread the

imputation of singularity. If from my extreme weakness this public company-keeping life cannot be made consistent with a heavenly frame of mind, I think I ought to retire more. Herein and in all things may God direct me; but let me strive more against my corruptions, and particularly not straiten prayer. I find myself confiding in my resolutions; let me universally distrust myself, but let me throw myself at the feet of Christ as an undone creature, distrusting yea despairing of myself, but firmly relying upon Him. 'Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out.' 'They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength.'"

These serious thoughts with which he mingled in the unthinking crowd of ordinary companions, were quickened by the affecting accounts which he received of the last hours of a near relation. "22nd January. Saw the astonishing letter from Miss More, containing an account, written inter moriendum, of Harriet Bird's death at six o'clock on Wednesday morning. Oh may my latter end be like hers! Strongly affected; may it be deeply." "I have been extremely affected by Miss More's account of Harriet's death-bed scene. —how can I but be so—particularly her illumination, and the following agony just before she was taken to glory. I have felt these things, I humbly hope, not in vain. She prayed for me on her death-bed. How does her progress shame me! I am behind, far behind all of them. But my eyes will not allow me to write; many tears to-day from mental struggles have injured

them. May God, for Christ's sake, cause them not to flow in vain. I fly to Him for pardon, pleading the blood of Jesus. Though I almost despair, yet Christ is mighty to save. I have been looking over letters written to me by Milner, Pitt, &c. when I first entered upon a religious profession. How little have I corresponded to the outset! Yet it is not too late. But I am apt to take comfort after writing thus, as though the business was done. Let me dismiss all vain confidence, and build upon the sure foundation."

A letter detailing the events which had occurred at Bath, called forth the following reply.

TO WILLIAM MANNING ESQ.

"Palace Yard, 20th January, 1792.

"My dear Manning,

My eyes are but indifferent to-day, and I have much work for them; yet I cannot forbear taking up my pen for a few moments, not from form you will believe, but feeling, on the perusal of your kind letter. Such a crowd of ideas rush into my mind, that I scarce know how to discriminate or select them. I cannot help almost envying you the scene you have been witnessing. O my dear friend, never forget it; let it still be present to your mind, and let it force all those concerns which are so apt to engross our imaginations, and interest our hearts, to retire to their proper distance, or rather to shrink to their true point of insignificance. Never let

me forget it. When I seem to you at any time to be intoxicated as it were by the hurry, the business, or the dissipation of life, spare not the best offices of friendship; recall me to that sobriety and seriousness of mind, which become those who know not when they may be called away: place before me the solemn triumphs of which you have been a spectator, and animate me to press forward in emulation of so glorious an example. To die the death, we must indeed live the life, of Christians. We must fix our affections on things above, not on things on the earth. We must endeavour habitually to preserve that frame of mind, and that course of conduct, with which we may be justly said to be waiting for the appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ. I know not any description of a Christian which impresses itself so forcibly as this on my mind. Alas! when with this which I ought to be I compare myself as I am, I am lost in unutterable shame and self-abasement. But I throw myself on the mercies of God in Christ; I resolve to venture all on this foundation; and relying on that help which is promised to them that ask it, I determine to struggle with all my corruptions, and to employ what is left to me of life, and talents, and influence, in the way which shall appear to me most pleasing to my heavenly Father. Oh with what humiliation have I to look back on the years wherein all these were so grossly wasted; and what reason have I to rejoice that I was not then snatched away!

"I will not apologize for giving you this picture

of my mind; you will accept it I trust (such indeed it is) as a proof of affection and confidence. In truth, I often regret that we are so separated, as not to afford us the opportunity of exhibiting proofs of this last to each other more frequently in personal communications. May the time at length come, when, through the goodness of God, we may indulge (with those friends we have before lost for this life) uninterrupted and ever-growing effusions of affection. I must lay aside my pen. Adieu. Remember me most kindly to Mary. I rejoice to hear she is so supported. Assure her of my constant prayers. Remember me also kindly to the Mores and to Dr. Fraser, whose tender assiduities I have heard of with sincere pleasure, and reflect on with real gratitude. Believe me, my dear Manning, in great haste,

ever affectionately yours,

W. WILBERFORCE."

To his other occupations, was soon added constant attendance on the parliamentary business of an important session. "I tremble for it," writes Dr. Burgh,[3] "and ardently wish to see its first fortnight well over; the blaze of opposition will by that time be out, and during the remainder they will smoulder on their own ashes. Russia and India are two such topics. With regard to France, keep us out of the scrape, or if we must get into it in consequence of the universal eddy of Europe, let it not be upon the aristocratical

[3] Jan. 19.

side: so sure as any state embraces that part, so surely, I now predict it, that state will itself experience a revolution or a civil war within the next ten years. Let us mediate if you please, and restore to mankind 'sub libertate quietem.'"

But though the many important questions which then came before parliament received a full share of his attention, the Abolition struggle mainly occupied his thoughts. About a month before he came to London he opened to Lord Muncaster the plan of action upon which he had at first decided. "I mean," he says, "to bring on the slave business within a month after parliament meets, that we may then, being defeated, sound the alarm throughout the land, (provoco ad populum,) get petitions, &c. and carry something important before the session is over. I mention this, lest Clarkson, to whom I threw it out, should have failed to tell you, and because you will regulate your motions accordingly." But before the session commenced there was so fair a promise of reviving interest in the cause, that he deemed it wiser to postpone his motion until he could propose it with the expected sanction of a great body of petitions. "I have considered, and talked over with several friends, our future plan of operations, and we are all at length pretty well agreed, that the best course will be to endeavour to excite the flame as much as possible in a secret way, but not to allow it more than to smother until after I shall have given notice of my intention of bringing the subject forward. This must

be the signal for the fire's bursting forth. We hope ere that time to have laid all our trains, and that by proper efforts the blaze will then be universal."[4]

The conduct of this "appeal to the people" now occupied his time, and he was daily rousing and directing the efforts of his adherents throughout the country. This was no appeal to the political impulses of the multitude. Rendered necessary "by that vote of the House of Commons on the Slave Trade question, which proved above all things the extremely low ebb of real principle there,"[5] it was addressed to the moral sympathies of the educated and religious classes. "I wish you and all other country labourers," he writes to Mr. Hey,[6] "to consider yourselves not as having concluded, but as only beginning your work: it is on the general impression and feeling of the nation we must rely, rather than on the political conscience of the House of Commons. So let the flame be fanned continually, and may it please God, in whose hands are the hearts of all men, to bless our endeavours." County meetings to petition parliament were what he chiefly wished to obtain. He could not but hope that the cause was gaining ground fast in the country, as it became better acquainted with the real nature of this horrid traffic. "Much good has been done by two little publications; the one an Abstract of the Evidence delivered on our side in the House of Commons; the

[4] To Rev. C. Wyvill, Dec. 19.

[5] To Mr. Gisborne, March 5. [6] Feb. 21

other the report of the Debate on my motion. I wish that you would adopt the best means that occur to you for circulating them generally, and securing for them a serious perusal. I own I am very desirous that our great county should deem this, as I am sure it is, a worthy occasion for its interference. You can judge how far a respectable county meeting could be convened for the purpose of petitioning parliament for the Abolition. Were Yorkshire but to open the path, other counties I am persuaded would crowd in after it, and gladly follow in its train. Pray turn this matter over in your mind, and remember only there is little room for delay."[7] "Burgh I imagine has taken counsel with you; I think could the meeting be well managed and creditably carried through, it might be of great use in stimulating other *county-lings* to follow the example."[8]

"I understand Lord Fitzwilliam is rather friendly, but I am not sure of it. The matter should be pushed forward if possible by those who are not my political friends; the reasons are obvious."[9] "Finding myself obliged," replies Mr. Mason, "to appear in the pulpit yesterday for the Dean, I contrived (by a sort of lyrical transition in my sermon) not only to applaud the plan of the new colony of Sierra Leone, but also to exhort my audience to renew their petitions for the Abolition." "Your meeting," he directs Mr. Babington,[10] who had reported Leicester as ready to

[7] To Mr. Wyvill, Jan. 18.
[8] To the Rev. W. Mason, Jan. 15
[9] To W. Hey Esq. Jan. 9.
[10] Jan. 9.

petition, "should be called immediately, that other towns might be more easily induced to walk in the desired road, when it shall be plainly chalked out, and well trodden before them." In many of these cases he was called on to appoint all the details of the expected meeting, and forced into a minuteness of arrangement, which led Mr. Gisborne, after saying, "Give us precise directions," to add, "I am aware that you are overwhelmed with business, and that taking up your time by questions respecting minutiæ in a department which you may reasonably think shifted to me, is as if the Christians in a petty village of Asia Minor were to pester the Pope with voluminous letters respecting the election of a door-keeper to their chapel. But the success of each branch of the general plan is material, and you can give me your instructions in less than five minutes."

"My dear Gisborne, I am sorry to tell you," he replies, "we must abandon the hope of deriving any benefit from Lord Harrowby, so far as a county meeting is concerned; the best we can hope is his remaining neuter. Your visit went off far better than I expected. But I am persuaded that it will exceed my powers to keep the fire at the heat you seem to have produced; or at most that it will be the utmost I can do. However, you may be assured I will use my endeavours. Consult topic '*Aristocratism*,' and you will find that all great men hate public meetings. But yet knowing that in this instance our main subject

is a man of a better sort than the generality of such cattle, I hope the effect of your country-bred advice, and my rus-in-urbe suggestions, will not be done away. The terms of your petition ought to be such as to allow of a man's signing it who rather recoils from the idea of immediate Abolition. It might not be amiss if you could, some way or other, make the proposal of moving or seconding come to Ryder through a respectable channel in the county, as well as through a private friend; (though I really believe *he* will be found ready to respond to the chord of friendship;) but if his father were to see reason to believe, that his coming forward would be likely to attach to him Wedgwood, and all the Abolitionists in Staffordshire, it might operate wonderfully. I rather doubt whether I can let the interval between my notice and my motion be quite so long as I talked of. I will endeavour to stave off the day of discussion till the middle of March, by way of giving time for the fermenting matter to work. Do not mistake my term 'stave.' I will keep to my day when it is once named.

"I thank God I keep well. But what a sad harassing place this is, and how infinitely grateful I ought to feel for the frequent recurrence of a day of undisturbed quiet, when it becomes a duty to retire, and which leaves me not the embarrassment of having to decide on each particular occasion between the comparative advantages of continuing in the busy scene or absconding from it. I wish I could sentence some of my friends to a little solitary imprisonment. They might then

see things in their true dimensions . . as a painter would say, in better keeping . . whereas now they think the objects close to them really giants, whilst they are in truth no more than pigmies, and the giants in the back-ground dwindle into pigmies in their view. May you and I, my dear friend, 'live by faith and not by sight.'"

To such a pitch was the zeal of the friends of Abolition at this time raised, that many had determined to abstain from the consumption of West Indian produce, until the measure should be carried. "We use East Indian sugar entirely," writes Mr. Babington, "and so do full two-thirds of the friends of Abolition in Leicester." "Please to take notice," says Mr. W. Smith, "that I have left off sugar completely and entirely for some time past, and shall certainly persevere in my resolution, though I am not yet at all reconciled to the deprivation of the most favourite gratification of my palate." Upon this point the opinion of Mr. Wilberforce was called for in many quarters, both for the direction of individual conduct, and to determine the line which should be held at county meetings. "When you have leisure to favour me with a line," wrote the venerable Newton, "I shall be glad of your judgment respecting the associations now rapidly forming to stop the consumption of West Indian produce. If you were to recommend such a measure I should readily adopt it; at present I think it premature." "What," asks Mr. Gisborne, "are we to say at our meeting as to the use of West Indian

sugar?" Mr. Wilberforce was at first disposed to recommend this measure, but upon a mature consideration of all its probable consequences he decided "that it should be suspended until, if necessary, it might be adopted with effect by general concurrence." This decision was evidently wise; so harsh a remedy would have disgusted numbers of moderate men who supported the cause of Abolition upon the highest grounds; and would have increased greatly the irritation which already pervaded the West Indian body; yet it was not without a struggle that the more violent of his followers obeyed his temperate counsels. The turbulent elements with which he had to work are thus graphically described by Mr. Mason.[11] "I perceive you have heard every thing relative to the York petition. I left the place the day after I had moved it, and arrived at Rotherham time enough to second our friend Tooker, but here matters went not off so unanimously. One of the quakers, by name Payne, (no relation to the 'Rights of Man' Paine, though full as vehement,) had prepared a paper, not in the least couched in petitionary terms, which he wished either to supersede or to be engrafted into Tooker's. With much difficulty we persuaded him that it ought to come in the form of a resolution, and I withdrew in a committee to arrange it in that mode. It is still too flaming, but Payne seemed to value his own composition too much to bear with greater alteration, and Tooker chose to gain his signature to the petition.

[11] Feb. 20.

I hear that at Sheffield three petitions were produced, and that dispute ran high as to which should be adopted.

Whilst he was thus rallying his country forces, accounts arrived of the recent outrages in St. Domingo. They afforded the enemies of Abolition a pretext for warmer opposition, and shook the faith of some of its adherents. Many too of those who continued zealous supporters of the cause, were for deferring a fresh appeal to parliament till a more convenient season. "People here are all panic-struck with the transactions in St. Domingo, and the apprehension or pretended apprehension of the like in Jamaica and other of our islands. I am pressed on all hands, except by W. Smith and the committee who hear little of the matter, to defer my motion till next year. I cannot yet think it right; the effect on our division must be more clearly established as highly injurious, either in the defalcation of our own numbers, or the increase of our enemies."[12] To Mr. Hey he writes upon the same subject—"Your Slave Trade proceedings have turned out far better than I had expected. Our opponents are endeavouring to turn against us the late transactions in St. Domingo and the apprehended commotions in Jamaica. Many even of our friends, too much like the American friends of whom Lord Cornwallis spoke in the year 1781, advise me to suspend my motion for the year on account of the unfavourable impression that has gone forth. I am

[12] To T. Babington Esq.

clearly convinced it may be proved to the satisfaction of every impartial man, that the success of our efforts would tend both directly and indirectly to produce quiet in the West Indian islands themselves, to say nothing of the lives it would preserve in Africa; and I am persuaded it would be highly injurious to our cause to recede for this session after all that has been said and done."

Nor was it only the natural timidity of irresolute minds which suggested this temporizing policy; pressing arguments to the same effect from a very different quarter tried but could not shake his resolution. "Called away after dinner to Slave Committee. Pitt threw out against Slave motion on St. Domingo account. I must repose myself on God. The insincerity of my heart has been shamefully evinced to me to-day, when I could hardly bring myself to resolve to do my duty and please God at the expense (as I suspect it will turn out) of my cordiality with Pitt, or rather his with me."[13] "Do not be afraid," he tells Mr. Babington, "lest I should give ground: I hope, through God's blessing, to be enabled to press forward, and never to abandon my pursuit or relax in it till . . a supposition hardly conceivable . . it shall become right so to do. This is a matter wherein all personal, much more all ministerial, attachments must be as dust in the balance. Meanwhile exert yourselves in the country with renewed vigour. I should be glad to have some petitions, if possible, even be-

[13] Diary.

fore my notice, that it may be evident the country is alarmed, and that no receding of mine could prevent the measure coming forward.—Poor fellow! I can feel for you: we people that live in this bustling place, are called off to other things from what would otherwise haunt and harass us." Mr. Gisborne had written in a former letter, "I am very anxious on account of the suspicion you intimate, but trust in your standing firm if possible." "I must be very short," he replies, "but I dare not let you wait another day, lest you burst in ignorance. Nothing more has passed with Pitt on the head I treated of in my last, nor shall pass speedily unless I change my opinion as to the best mode in which I can proceed. Meanwhile do you in the country exert yourselves with tenfold earnestness; petition, resolve, &c.; if it was before important, it is now indispensable."

Nor was this the only difficulty peculiar to that troubled season. It was at this time that the fraternizing spirit of revolutionary France established affiliated societies in foreign nations, and threatened our own population with the infection of her leprous touch. From the contagion of her principles the sounder part of the nation shrunk back with horror, and viewed with the utmost suspicion whatever bore the least resemblance to them. The supporters of the Slave Trade were not slow in turning to their own advantage this excited state of public feeling. The name of Jacobin, and the charge of holding revolutionary tenets, might be easily affixed to any advo-

cate of liberty; whilst, however wantonly imputed, they could not in those times of wakeful suspicion be readily removed. It was moreover inevitable, that amongst the friends of Abolition should be ranged some actual abettors of these extreme opinions. "It is certainly true, and perfectly natural, that these Jacobins are all friendly to the Abolition; and it is no less true and natural that this operates to the injury of our cause. However, I am not discouraged. You seem yourself to be deep in Abolition lore; I am glad of it, as I am sure you will be proportionably earnest. It is a superficial view alone, which makes a man of sense honestly against us."[14] This evil had been for some time spreading amongst a certain class of his supporters; and had scarcely been suppressed by his skill and patience. "You will see Clarkson," writes Mr. Wilberforce to Lord Muncaster;[15] "caution him against talking of the French Revolution; it will be ruin to our cause." "Clarkson," writes Dr. Milner, "would tell you that he had a long conversation with me. I wish him better health, and better notions in politics; no government can stand on such principles as he appeals to, and maintains. I am very sorry for it, because I see plainly advantage is taken of such cases as his, in order to represent the friends of Abolition as levellers. This is not the only instance where the converse of a proposition does not hold: levellers certainly are friends of Abolition." Great mischief had already arisen to the cause. "What

[14] To W. Hey Esq. [15] Oct.

business had your friend Clarkson," asked Dundas, "to attend the Crown and Anchor last Thursday? He could not have done a more mischievous thing to the cause you have taken in hand."[16] "On Wednesday last," says Mr. Wilberforce's Diary shortly after he received this letter, "to Pitt's at Holwood. Staid till Saturday—with Pitt to town in his phaeton, and interesting talk about Abolition. Some vote against it not to encourage Paine's disciples."

This impression affected his success elsewhere; it had reached the highest quarter with peculiar force; and created henceforth an inseparable obstacle to the exercise of any ministerial influence in behalf of Abolition. There had been a time, when George III. had whispered at the levee, "How go on your black clients, Mr. Wilberforce?" but henceforth he was a determined opposer of the cause. Yet in spite of these unfavourable circumstances, it was evidently right to bring the question forward. The sympathy of the country was too much aroused to be patient of delay. Public meetings, and petitions numerously signed, multiplied both in England and in Scotland. From the latter country Mr. Ross writes, "The clergy to a man are favourable to the cause;" and Dr. Dickson adds, "The people have taken up the matter in the view of duty and religion, and do not inquire what any man, or set of men, think of it. From London to Inverness Mr. Pitt's sincerity is questioned, and unless he can convince the nation of his cordiality in our cause, his

[16] To W. Wilberforce Esq., July 18, 1791.

popularity must suffer greatly." Even from Liverpool, where the corporation had spent, first and last,[17] upwards of £10,000 in their parliamentary opposition to his motions, he hears from Dr. Currie—"You will, perhaps, be surprised that Liverpool does not petition for the trade. Liverpool will never again, I think, petition on this subject; conviction of the truth has spread amongst us widely. Tarleton is doing himself an injury he little suspects."[18]

Upon the 2nd of April Mr. Wilberforce proposed his motion in a debate, which he describes the following morning to Mr. Hey. "I know how much you are interested in what regards our poor African fellow-creatures, and therefore I take up my pen for a single moment to inform you that, after a very long debate, (we did not separate till near seven this morning,) my motion for immediate Abolition was put by; though supported strenuously by Mr. Fox, and by Mr. Pitt with more energy and ability than were almost ever exerted in the House of Commons." "Windham, who has no love for Pitt, tells me, that Fox and Grey, with whom he walked home after the debate, agreed with him in thinking Pitt's speech one

[17] Besides printing works in defence of the Slave Trade, and remunerating their authors; paying the expenses of "delegates and agents to attend in London, and watch Mr. Wilberforce's proceedings" (order book of Liverpool council); they pensioned the widows of Norris and Green, and voted plate to Mr. Penny, for their exertions in this cause. The corporation of Liverpool, let it be remembered, believed firmly at this time, that the very existence of their town depended upon the continuance of this trade.

[18] He was thrown out at the next election.

of the most extraordinary displays of eloquence they had ever heard. For the last twenty minutes he really seemed to be inspired." "He was dilating upon the future prospects of civilizing Africa, a topic which I had suggested to him in the morning."[19] "We carried a motion however afterwards for gradual Abolition, against the united forces of Africans and West Indians, by a majority of 238 to 85. I am congratulated on all hands, yet I cannot but feel hurt and humiliated. We must endeavour to force the gradual Abolitionists in *their* Bill (for I will never myself bring forward a parliamentary licence to rob and murder) to allow as short a term as possible, and under as many limitations."[20] "I am glad to hear you say," replies Mr. Hey, "that you will not bring in a Bill to license robbery and murder. I think this resolution becoming your conduct on the ground you have taken. But if no scruple of this kind weighed with you, you will undoubtedly have the advantage in being the corrector, rather than the proposer, of the Bill. What you proposed would probably be curtailed in some degree. Whatever others propose you will probably be able to modify."

Congratulations upon this limited success poured in from all quarters. "I thought of you," wrote the Dean of Carlisle,[21] "most unremittingly the whole day of April 2nd, and a good deal of the night, which to me was a very restless one. I bless God, and

[19] Con. Mem. [20] To Mr. Hey.
[21] April 9.

surely you have great reason to be thankful, that it pleases him to endow you with so much bodily energy, that you are able to exert your talents so steadily, and for so long a time, on such great occasions. Greater occasions can hardly ever occur, and I think there can be no doubt but you have gained some ground; though I find many people think otherwise. On the first view I thought so too, but on reading the debates I am satisfied that much ground is gained as far as respects public opinion; the opposers are plainly overawed and ashamed. The worst circumstance is this Dundas—nobody thinks well of him—duplicity and artifice are esteemed parts of his character—he is judged to do what he does unwillingly and with design, in the worst sense. Ne graveris upon my making these observations on him. I know he says you have as pure a heart as ever inhabited human breast. Such things you can withstand, but there is a stream of more delicate applause which is likely to have more effect, and against which it is more difficult to guard."

"On the whole," he says after the debate,[22] "matters have turned out better than I expected, and I am thankful for what we have obtained. And yet—but this would draw me on, and I must conclude." On the following day he wrote more fully to Mr. Gisborne. "Instead of having a little leisure, I am just now even more occupied than ever in dictating my speech. Nothing ever was so absurd, and, in spite of the tragical nature of the subject, so ludicrous, as

[22] To Rev. C. Wyvill, April 9.

what the short-hand men have furnished. I have not seen Fox since Dundas gave his notice, (I was not in the House at the time,) but I conceive the committee of the 18th will, of course, be adjourned to a subsequent day. Of his plan I have heard no more since we parted, and I am a little shy of discussing the matter with him, lest I should be drawn into the necessity of either irritating him by opposition, or appearing to acquiesce improperly. I mean to go to Pitt's to-morrow or the next day, and I shall then be able to keep a tolerable look out, safe from mischief. My present opinion, but I wish for yours, is, that I ought not to allow a longer term than four years, but denounce, if even five are talked of, a determined and vigorous war—hold out the possible adoption of the abstaining measure, and the recommendation of it to the country at large. I rather believe, unless Dundas be forced to it, he will not name any specific time, but hold out the prospect of an accelerated or retarded Abolition, accordingly as the islands shall more or less cordially concur in his scheme, professing that if they will not concur at all he will next year consent to immediate Abolition. But my impression is that this must not be allowed, but that the ultimate duration must now be fixed."

In this hurry of business he enters,[23] "Perhaps I have been a little more attentive to my devotions in this last week; yet too little thinking of God's presence and favour. But though with a cold heart, I

[23] Diary.

will proceed, praying for more grace; and though this next fortnight will be a sadly hurrying time, I will hope, by God's help, to amend at least in some things. Look to Jesus: all other modes are vain."

On the 23rd Mr. Dundas brought forward his Resolutions for a gradual Abolition. "After a hard struggle," writes Mr. Wilberforce,[24] "we were last night defeated in our attempt to fix the period of the Abolition for the 1st of January, 1795; the numbers being 161 to 121. But we carried the 1st of January, 1796, (Mr. Dundas had proposed 1800,) by a majority of 151 against 132. On the whole this is more than I expected two months ago, and I have much cause for thankfulness. We are to contend for the numbers of slaves to be imported; and *then for the House of Lords.*" "Not long ago," writes Dr. Milner, "I had no expectation of success respecting the Slave Trade; then you seemed to be carrying every thing; and now we are down in the mouth again, both because four years are allowed, and because there seems the greatest danger from the House of Lords.—However, you have great reason to be thankful, for God seems to bless your labours; and I remember I told you long ago, if you carry this point in your whole life, that life will be far better spent than in being Prime Minister many years."

Upon the 1st of May, when the question came again before the House, Mr. Dundas declared himself unable to propose his Resolutions as amended by

[24] April 28. Letter to W. Hey Esq.

the late division. They were therefore moved by Mr. Pitt, and upon the following day communicated to the Lords in a free conference. Here the opponents of the measure rallied their broken forces; and in spite of Lord Grenville's able arguments, prevailed upon the House to proceed by calling evidence to their own bar; a resolution in itself equivalent to a direct vote, which followed on the 5th of June, when the business was formally postponed to the ensuing session.

Much had undoubtedly been gained in the course of these debates. All direct defence of the trade was now abandoned. The charges of its opponents were admitted to be true. Its ultimate necessity to the colonies was no longer maintained. On the 2nd of April Mr. Jenkinson had faintly attempted to raise his voice in its defence; but his proposal for encouraging the breed of colonial negroes instead of directly attacking importation, was at once rejected by the House. "No man hereafter," said Mr. Pitt, "can pretend to argue that the Abolition of the trade ought not to take place, however he may wish from motives of private interest to defer the day of its suppression." Yet in conceding so much, and thus changing the ground of conflict, Mr. Dundas showed much of that adroit management which distinguished his political career. A direct defence of the odious traffic was no longer possible. Its existence might yet be prolonged by the easy expedient of continual delay; whilst the promise of future Abolition gained the irresolute amongst the

advocates of humanity, and fully satisfied "the moderate men," who hang as doubtful allies upon the skirts of such a body. Nor could any one be fitter than himself for the task he had assumed. A frank and joyous temper was united in Mr. Dundas with great natural sagacity, and much knowledge of mankind. The apparent honesty and warmth of heart which marked his speeches, enabled him to turn aside what he knew well how to represent as a false and sickly humanity. Oppression could not find a kinder advocate, or abuses a more honest patron. "I cannot," was, thirty years later, Mr. Wilberforce's comment upon a letter, which he at the time received, "at all relish what is here said in favour of gradual Abolition. You must remember that it was to the fatal appeal made to that principle, that we chiefly owed the defeat of our first assault, and the twenty years' continuance of the murderous traffic."[55] "Our opponents, except a very few, who were directly interested by their property or political connexion with certain towns, professed to concur with us in design, but to adopt a more moderate, and as they contended more effectual, method of accomplishing our common purpose; so that many who could not avowedly oppose us became our most dangerous enemies."

The friends of Abolition did not readily submit to the postponement of the question. Other measures of a temporary nature were projected, and only laid aside through a politic regard to their main object.

[55] Letter to W. Wallace Currie Esq.

"We found there was no chance of getting any Bill through the Lords; and Grenville and all those who should be best acquainted with the disposition of that body were not only positive on this head, but also that by any such attempt we should materially injure our main cause. To these considerations I scarcely yielded so implicitly as not to be inclined to try at least for a limitation of tonnage, but Grenville decided me (this entre nous) by saying that he himself would not fight our battle, but would frankly declare he thought this 'an excess of zeal.' Now I am sure such an avowal from him, or any coldness on his part, would do us infinite mischief; for we have nothing to depend on against the effect of St. James's, and the Guelph family's being against us, but that of Pitt and all his connexions and known supporters being warmly with us."[26]

The bustle of this busy session had not dispelled those serious purposes with which he had commenced its labours. "The beginning of a long recess draws near, and I will endeavour to consecrate it to God by a day of solemn prayer and fasting. I will labour to lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset me, and to adorn the doctrine of God my Saviour; to follow peace with all men, and above all to love the Lord my God with all my heart. O strengthen me, Lord, by Thy grace, for I am very weakness; cleanse me, for I am all corruption; and since ease begets carelessness, may I be clothed with

[26] To Mr. Babington, June 7.

humility, and may I fear alway."[27] The conclusion of the session did not at once release him. "Parliament was prorogued upon the 18th," he says, "but I am kept here in expectation of Mr. Gilbert, from Sierra Leone. Upon the 16th I dined at Lord Camden's, —Grenville, Chatham, Pitt, Dundas. I rejoice that I am now likely to have leisure for quiet thought; how much do I stand in need of it! Dropped in one day at Dundas's, and much surprised to find Lord Loughborough there. After staying till June 28th, I set off from town with my sister for Bath, going round by Corfe Castle." "After dangling in and about town, till my patience was exhausted, and my health really suffering, in expectation of a ship from Sierra Leone, I drove off into Dorsetshire, and thence travelled to Bath. But scarce had I entered upon my course of waters, when I received from Henry Thornton a summons to Lawrence Pountney Lane, and after some consideration I determined to obey. Accordingly I despatched my sister to a friend in the neighbourhood, and came off, though not 'creeping like snail' yet most 'unwillingly to school.' You will naturally conclude I have had little leisure in this constant state of locomotion; and travelling in the summer is always unfavourable to my eyes. I am therefore dreadfully in arrears with all my correspondents. We are sitting here all day long, and I cannot but believe to good purpose finally, though daily more and more sensible of the indispens-

[27] Journal, June 10.

able necessity of the Abolition of the Slave Trade, and of the terrible influence of this detestable traffic on the morals and characters of the natives."[28]

The contest in behalf of Abolition was throughout conducted by Mr. Wilberforce in a spirit of conciliation towards the supporters of the trade. Some amongst the West Indian body were his personal friends, and of all "we should not forget," he writes to Dr. Currie, "that Christian candour is due to the characters of those who carry it on. There may be, I doubt not, amongst them many men of enlarged and humane minds. I trust that you have done me the justice to acquit me of having adopted any such indiscriminate and false judgment as that you oppose." But it was not to be expected, that in a strife which called into violent action the whole energies of many lower natures, he should always meet with opponents of a spirit like his own. He had throughout the struggle to bear the imputation of unworthy motives, and the various assaults of personal slander. No one could unite with him in this cause, without in some measure sharing in this treatment. "My testimony before the House of Commons," writes one[29] who had the boldness to detail the observations of a long residence in the West India islands, "has drawn upon me a plentiful load of abuse, the falling off of all my West India connexions, and from some of them the grossest insult." "I crave your friendship," wrote Captain

[28] To Lord Muncaster, July.
[29] Hercules Ross Esq. of Rossie, North Britain.

Hall, "in behalf of a virtuous family of eight persons who have been deprived of the benefits of my industry, through my evidence on the African Slave Trade. No other cause whatever has operated to my prejudice as master of a ship, but my testimony on that black committee." To engage in correspondence with Wilberforce, was esteemed sufficient ground for such annoyance. In the island of Tortola, the papers of an English gentleman known to be guilty of this crime were seized by order of the president of the council, on the charge of their containing proofs of a treasonable correspondence with the French. This jealousy extended even to Great Britain. "The box in which our petition is enclosed," says a Glasgow correspondent, "has been directed to another, that its contents may be unsuspected." And other residents in Liverpool of the same rank of life asked with the late Dr. Currie, "If you write, be pleased to direct without your franking it." Their correspondence was conducted in unsigned letters, sent under the covers of unsuspected persons. In a letter which does not allude to West Indian matters, and was therefore openly transmitted, Dr. Currie adds this postscript, "Trusting this letter to our post office with your address, I shall be anxious to hear of its safe arrival." The attacks which were aimed against himself, were not always of this comparatively harmless character. At an early period of the contest he had been in danger of personal violence, from "one, who from my having been compelled in quality of examiner in the

committee to bring forward his inconsistencies, conceived so violent a hatred of me, as even to threaten my life."[30] The summer of 1792 had exposed him to two more such assailants. He had just returned to London upon Mr. Henry Thornton's summons, when the challenge of a West Indian captain, which had been delivered at his Bath lodgings, followed him by post to town. He marks in his Journal his sense of God's goodness in so ordering this business, that he was thus allowed leisure to reflect upon the line of conduct which it became him to adopt. "Talked," says his Diary at this time, "with S. about duelling. He says he should fight, though disapproving. I deprecated. My plans uncertain. I rather think of returning to Bath, perhaps partly from a desire of not appearing to be deterred thence; and partly from thinking, that a proper and easy explanation of my determination and views in respect to duelling, might be in all respects eligible. At all events, I will enter now upon a more diligent course, which may suit any plan. I often waste my time in waiting for suitable seasons; whereas I ought, as a single man, to be at home every where; or at least, to be always at work." This affair was carried no further; but he was, at the very same time, brought into collision with another assailant, to whose threatened violence he was exposed for more than two years. Kimber, another West Indian captain, was thus described by Sir James Stonhouse, to whom Mr. Wilberforce had applied for

[30] Letter to W. Wallace Currie Esq. Jan. 21, 1829.

the particulars of his character. "He is a very bad man, a great spendthrift; one who would swear to any falsehood, and who is linked with a set of rascals like himself." This man had been charged by Mr. Wilberforce, in the debate of April, 1792, with great cruelty in his conduct of the trade. Several trials in the courts of law followed; in one of which the Captain was himself capitally indicted for the murder of a negro girl. Of this charge he was not found guilty; escaping, in the judgment of Mr. Wilberforce, "through the shameful remissness of the Crown lawyers, and the indecent behaviour of a high personage who from the bench identified himself with the prisoner's cause." These reasons were aided by the apparent contradictions of a principal witness, in his evidence upon a collateral point, for which he was tried and convicted in the penalties of perjury; a sentence afterwards commuted by the Crown.

"You will have collected" (writes Mr. Wilberforce to Lord Muncaster[31]) "from the newspapers, that whatever may have been the demerits of the witnesses for the prosecution, Kimber is in no degree acquitted in foro conscientiæ, of the cruelties with which he is charged. The witnesses have been scandalously used, and after their fate he will be a bold man who shall venture to step forth to bring an African captain to justice." "I have read Kimber's trial," replies Lord Muncaster, "and though published partially by his friends, I am astonished at their

[31] June 14, 1792.

triumph—to me there appears conscious guilt throughout."

As soon as he was discharged from prison he applied to Mr. Wilberforce for what he termed remuneration for his wrongs. "July 11th. Morning received Kimber's letter. Friday, by Pitt's advice, wrote answer to Kimber." The satisfaction he demanded was "A public apology, £5000 in money, and such a place under government as would make me comfortable." Upon receiving a brief refusal of his propositions, Kimber had recourse to violence. "Kimber lying in wait for me—first civil, then abusive."[32] "Kimber called between seven and eight, and again about ten." "'Very savage looking,' Amos said, 'he went away muttering and shaking his head.'"[33] The interference of Lord Sheffield (an honourable opponent) at last terminated this annoyance, but not before one of his friends (the late Lord Rokeby) had thought it needful to become his armed companion in a journey into Yorkshire, to defend him from anticipated violence. "I know," wrote Mr. Wilberforce at this time to Lord Muncaster in Cumberland, "how little the proverb, 'Out of sight out of mind,' holds good in the case of any of your friendships, and therefore I was not surprised at the warmth with which you expressed yourself on the subject of Kimber. How came you to hear any thing of the matter? Was it from me? I am sure I intended not to mention it lest I should awaken your kind solicitude, which at

[32] Diary. [33] Ib.

three hundred miles from its object is not the most comfortable companion. Perhaps at some unguarded moment the matter slipped from my pen. I don't yet know whether he has any further measures in store: meanwhile be assured I will do all for my own security, which you would think proper if you were my adviser. I can't say I apprehend much, and I really believe, that if he were to commit any act of violence it would be beneficial rather than injurious to *the cause*."

Being still detained in the neighbourhood of London by Sierra Leone business, he applied himself at once to his intended course of study. "Taken in," he says,[34] "to dine at W. Smith's, with a vast company—Dr. Aikin, Gillies, Mr. and Mrs. Barbauld, Helen Maria Williams, Mackintosh, Mr. Belsham, Mr. Sabbatière, Mr. and Mrs. Towgood. I was not sufficiently guarded in talking about religion after dinner. Mackintosh talked away—he spoke most highly of Pitt's Slave Trade speech. Came home as if hunted to Thornton's quiet family party, and much struck with the difference. I threw out some things which may perhaps be of use. 25th. Had a long conversation with Pearson, on the proper measure of a Christian's living in society, whether religious or worldly. He was very strong for solitude, and speaks of the benefit he personally has received from it. I talked with him very openly, and was much struck with what he said. Sunday, 29th. I have to-day been for

[34] July 24.

several hours engaged in religious reading, but too languidly. I have had this week some very serious talk with Mr. Pearson. He strongly pressed solitude, from reason, Scripture, and his own personal experience. I believe he is right, and mean to seek more quiet and solitude than I have done; to consider the point, and draw up my thoughts upon it. 30th. Read Howe 'On Delighting in God,' and much affected by it. Heard from Osborne that there would be no county meeting, and therefore set free; and on thinking the matter over, resolved for Bath. Wrote to Mr. Cecil to ask him to be my companion. Amongst my reasons for Bath one, though not the leading one, is the desire of solitude; may God render it useful to me."

Next day he set off for Bath, and "on the road it occurring to me [35] that it might be useful for me to be early in seeing Sir W. Young, who is just come from the West Indies, and that he was not a quarter of a mile out of the road, I drove to his house, Huntercombe, and staid all night. The visit did not turn out to answer any good purpose. Boswell there, a great enemy of the Abolition—said that he was at Kimber's trial, and gloried in it. Sir William read a letter from G. to his father—some wit, but affected, and full of levity and evil; written in 1773, when he was near sixty, alas! Bozzy talked of Johnson, &c. Sat up too late. Sir William very friendly—talked of Slave Trade, and mentioned having found a great

[35] Diary.

number of children without relations on board several ships he visited, who from inquiry appeared to have been kidnapped. Wednesday. Had some serious talk with Bozzy, who admitted the depravity of human nature. Last night he expressed his disbelief of eternal punishment. He asked Sir W. to take his boy home, and walked off into the West of England with the 'Spirit of Athens' under his arm, and two shirts and a night-cap in his pocket, sans servant. I drove with Sir W. Young in his phaeton to Maidenhead, and then got into my carriage. Sir W. speaks highly of the Moravians, and their operations. He himself preached to his slaves on the Ten Commandments, &c. His adherence to his own principles is highly honourable to him. How little is my heart or conduct answerable to my greater knowledge! Travelled on—reading and writing in the carriage, but not fixedly. 4th August. Began the waters. Saw Forster—much altered, and felt rather ashamed to speak to him in a public room; but shook hands with him. 5th, Sunday. Abbey church, morning—P. preached a Calvinistic sermon which in 'a methodist' would have been called antinomian: but character, and want of pressing home, secured him. S.'s sermon in the afternoon rather too much split into divisions; not unity enough preserved, which obstructs the roll and prevents effect. I do not find my solitude irksome, though a rational friend, particularly if a fellow-student and a truly serious companion, would certainly be an acquisition.

"My dear Muncaster," he writes[36] in answer to a friendly remonstrance upon the postponement of a long-promised visit, "notwithstanding your admonition behold me entering upon a course of Bath waters, prudently however and moderately like Muncaster the citizen; not rashly and violently like Pennington the soldier. My dear fellow, I the more readily yield myself to the impulse of duty which brings me hither, because it is altogether contrary to my inclination, and I am therefore sure I am not under any unfair bias. It would be a high gratification to me to be cooling my feet upon the mossy brow of Muncaster Park, instead of burning and parching them on the rest-refusing pavement of Bath. But do not think I am dissatisfied, and not rather grateful to God for His overflowing mercies to me of every kind; indeed I know no man who has so many. I have often thought, that the loss of nineteen-twentieths of my fortune would scarcely be a loss to me, since I have so many friends whose attachment I know so well that I should not fear to visit them though reduced to poverty; and you know human nature well enough to acknowledge that this implies confidence. I assure you that in such a case I should not be slow to direct my steps to Muncaster. You will, I know, be shocked to hear that poor Philips has been suddenly carried out of this world. O my dear friend, may events like this impress on us the survivors by how frail a tenure we hold our present life, and excite us to strive for that

[36] June 6.

state wherein we may be always ready to attend the awful call. In a moment like that, how contemptible will appear all those objects of pleasure or ambition which have at times engaged our warmest affections! 'Give an account of thy stewardship, for thou mayest be no longer steward.' What emphatic words!

I am always affectionately yours,

W. WILBERFORCE."

He was soon joined by such a companion as he had desired, in the person of Mr. Grant, who with his wife and eldest daughter arrived at Bath upon the 10th of August. "Since the Grants are with me," he says, "I study less. I have been reading Sir B. Boothby's pamphlets, Mackintosh's, G. Rose's; Goldsmith's Animated Nature, Lowth's Isaiah, Owen, Thomson's Seasons, and Horace by heart. 16th. Forster and D. dined with us. The conversation turned on interesting topics—education of children, behaviour towards irreligious people, &c. I thought them not sensible enough of the value of time. Forster extremely humble. D. showed too much levity in speaking of serious things. Talked with strange apparent ease and cheerfulness of his father's dying a rank Socinian, almost an atheist; and of his two brothers being now unbelievers. 17th. This is the day on which Pitt, Dundas, P. Arden, and Steele are at Hamels.[37] I am disposed to wish myself with them. I find that even here in religious society I can have

[37] Mr. Robert Smith's.

an earthly mind; yet to depart (when not necessary to be with them) from those who fear not God, and to associate with those who do, is one part of waiting on God to which the promise is made. 'Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.'"

Though he at this time diminished in some measure his intercourse with those of whom he could not hope that they were living with a constant reference to unseen things, yet he did not retire rudely from their friendship. Not that his intimacies had ever been among the enemies of religion; he had never been so blind as to expect a national reformation from men of abandoned character; and neither Mr. Pitt nor his other friends had ever been tainted with unbelief, or allied to that infidel party which has at all times found its rallying point in opposition to God and His church. Hence his constant care to employ his private influence for the advancement of religion was not impeded by their opposition of principles: the maxims for which he contended might not be duly appreciated, but they formed part of their admitted creed. Thus, upon the 11th of August, he hears from Mr. Dundas:—

"My dear Wilberforce,

I received your letter, and have given directions for the appointment of the clergyman[38] you recommend. Perhaps, as you say, I do not think to the

[38] As additional chaplain at Botany Bay.

same extent as you do upon subjects of this nature, but I do not yield to any one in my opinion of the necessity of religious education, and continued instructions under regular institutions, if we hope to preserve any tie upon the actions of men in civil society. I should doubt, however, whether the settlers were so numerous as to require more than one clergyman at each place, but if you convince me that I am mistaken I am willing to retract, and do not regard any expense that may arise from it. As to the schoolmasters the case is more pressing, and I have no difficulty in trusting to your discretion, and the purity of your intentions, in providing and recommending proper persons to me. It will give you pleasure to hear that the King, in the most handsome and gentlemanlike manner, has *compelled* Mr. Pitt to accept the appointment of Warden of the Cinque Ports, vacant by the death of poor Lord Guildford. I wish you much success from the waters of Bath, and remain, my dear Wilberforce,

Yours very sincerely,

HENRY DUNDAS.

"To W. Wilberforce, Esq."

Mr. Pitt had not left him to gather this appointment from a third person; but with a readiness which showed something of Cæsar's anxiety for the applause of Cato, had written to him upon the very day the offer reached him.

"Burton, Pynsent, Aug. 8, 1792.

"My dear Wilberforce,

I should like of all things to accept your invitation, but I must be at Windsor on Sunday, and I want to stay here till the last minute for the chance of seeing Eliot and my little niece, who may perhaps arrive from Cornwall before I set out. Since I received your letter, a circumstance has happened, which I believe upon the whole you will not be sorry to learn. Immediately upon Lord Guildford's death the King has written to me in the most gracious terms, to say that he cannot let the Wardenship of the Cinque Ports go to any one except myself. Under all the present circumstances, and in the manner in which the offer came, I have no hesitation in accepting it; and I believe you will think I have done right.

Yours ever,

W. PITT."

"I told him," says Mr. Wilberforce to another friend, "that I agreed with him in thinking that upon the whole he had acted right."

"Sunday, 19th. To Bathwick, where an old venerable pastor has had the living since 1745. Mr. Forster dined with us. An Israelite indeed—he said that he never felt that longing to depart, unmixed with fear, which Mr. Barham's Memoirs, we were reading, ascribed to him, and asked Grant and me if we did. God help me.

"20th. Had some useful meditation. F. dined with us. Poor fellow, sensible, generous, unaffected, temperate, but I fear without God.

"23rd. Forster dined with us. He more and more gains on me—mentioned that his first impression was from seeing a poor manufacturer praying with his children. They turned out ill, whilst Forster was brought by it to God. How wonderful are His ways; and how unsearchable His counsels!

"24th. Spent this day chiefly in religious exercises, and had much serious thought, but found my heart often earthly, and wasting time in what was rather general staring than distinct self-examination. I have been looking over the principal events of my past life; and what cause do I find for contrition, and for admiring the long-suffering of God, that he did not cut me off whilst in the full career of thoughtlessness; or since, when enjoying every advantage, I have put them to so little purpose! I am now entering my thirty-fourth year; above the half of my life is spent. Oh spare me yet, Thou God of mercy, and render me yet an ornament to my Christian profession; yet in this make me altogether resigned to Thy will, give me only the love of Thee, and a victory over my corruptions.

"25th. To Cowslip Green, calling upon Sir James Stonehouse. Found Miss H. More very poorly, yet all activity.

"26th, Sunday. Accompanied the Miss Mores to Shipham, Hounswick, Axbridge, and Chedder. God seems indeed to prosper their work; both amongst

young and old are those who are turning to Him. Near a thousand children in all. One mere child had brought all his father's household to family prayers. On the 27th, returned to Bath.

"Tuesday, Sept. 4th. Set off early for London; and on the 5th went on to Hamels, thinking it was right—Smith, Pitt, and Dundas expecting me; found also Pepper and Lady Arden." Upon the 15th, "at Mr. Grant's persuasion," he "returned to Clapham for the purpose of seeing Shore,[39] (who is just fixed on for governor-general,) and instituting a connexion with him for the sake of Indian objects." "19th. Dined with Pitt, where Dundas and Shore."

"The convention" had bestowed upon Mr. Wilberforce in the course of this summer the doubtful honour of French citizenship. "I was provoked lately," writes Mr. Mason,[40] "to see your name registered among the list of citizens by the French savages. And for what? Merely for taking up the cause of humanity previous to their taking up the love of freedom; the love of which, even during their first and best exertions, was not strong enough to induce them to follow your humane steps." "I am considering," he himself writes to Mr. Babington, "how to prevent the ill effect which this vote might have upon our Abolition cause." Such an opportunity was afforded him by a public meeting held in London at this time to raise subscriptions for the emigrant clergy.

"Friday, 20th. To town to the French clergy public

[39] Sir John Shore, afterwards Lord Teignmouth. [40] Sept. 11.

meeting, and consented to be on the committee at Burke's request, partly to do away French citizenship.

" 26th. Shore and Mrs. S. to dine and sleep—he very pleasing. Evening dragged, because we did not separate; this the source and obligation for cards." This acquaintance with Sir J. Shore, which he sought at first with a view to future exertions for the good of India, grew into an intimate friendship, which outlived the interruptions of middle life, and lasted into the peaceful evening of their days.

" Oct. 1st. To town; breakfasted with Shore, and much pleased with him—dined to meet him at Grenville's. French clergy's committee in the morning, where Burke flew off on the French Revolution.

" 2nd. Off for Walmer Castle—at Canterbury found it too late to go on, so halted. 3rd. On to Walmer. Pitt received me very kindly, and with great warmth of affection. 4th. At night alone with Pitt, but talked politics only—did not find myself equal to better talk. I came here hoping that I might really find an opportunity of talking seriously with Pitt. What am I, to do so with any one? O Christ, help me. 5th. Morning had some serious talk with Pitt—interrupted or should have had more. Walked with him. I see much reason to admire his integrity, public spirit, and magnanimity in despising unpopularity. Told me his finance plans. An incident showed the nature of the King's mind, (Charterhouse Governorship,) and Dundas's generous and high spirit. Eliot arrived at a late dinner. Affection glistened in his countenance,

when he came in to Pitt. I stole off to bed at 11, and got off early on Saturday morning, thinking no further object of sufficient magnitude would be attained by my staying, to balance a quiet instead of an unsabbatical Sunday, feeling for my servants," &c.

At Theobald's, (the house of his cousin Mrs. Lucy Smith,) where he joined his mother and his sister shortly afterwards, he received upon the 13th of October "a letter from Sir C. Middleton, containing the account of the sudden death of Lady Middleton, and of Edwards' child." "I resolved to go to them, hoping that I might comfort them, and perhaps be of use to Edwards. Drove to Teston. Oh how unavailing is all but the grace of God to change the heart! *Here* I am earthly-minded—O change my heart, Thou who alone canst effect this mighty transformation. 15th. Spent most of the day in talking with Sir C. Middleton. Much affected at night, and prayed earnestly. Struck solemnly with the thought of poor Lady M.'s dead body in the house. 16th. Morning spent in talking; prayed with some earnestness I hope. The Bishop of London and Mrs. Porteus called, and had some talk. But how much easier is it to talk of these things than to be religious. 17th. The funeral this evening. Sir Charles greatly supported, and Mrs. Edwards still more signally; her ready and powerful help from prayer: prayed to God if it were His will for strength to bear the funeral of her child, and she supported it without a wet eye. Sir Charles said in walking from church that he was really very com-

fortable, and that though he felt much in slowly pacing after the coffin, yet on entering the church he found a holy contentment and composure which was scarce ever disturbed. He went to the grave. I had much talk with Mrs. Bouverie this and the next day. 18th. I had resolved to stay over this day lest they should be at once too solitary. Sir Charles has risen very much in my esteem. Mrs. Bouverie very humble, and though tried with speculative doubts, firmly resolved to do her duty; she talked to me to-day very openly. May God bless them all, and reward and advance them."

From Teston he returned to Theobald's, and in the course of the succeeding week went on to Yoxall Lodge, where, with the exception of a short visit to Rothley Temple, he remained until he was called to London by the business of the session. Here he resumed the diligent employments of the preceding summer, giving however more time than formerly to studies of a directly religious character. "I have been employing," he says, "most of this morning[41] in reading St. Paul's Epistles to the Romans and the Galatians." It was by this careful study, which no press of business ever interrupted, and which continued daily through his life, that he obtained an acquaintance with holy Scripture unusual even in professed theologians. A marked advance in his character during the course of this year may be traced in the altered tone of his most private entries.

[41] Nov. 22.

Still indeed they abounded in that deep humiliation with which they who have looked closely into the perfect law of liberty must ever contemplate their own fulfilment of its demands; yet they bear already more of that calm and peaceful character which cast so warm a light upon his later days. "Though utterly *unworthy*," he says, "I thank God for having enabled me to pray with earnestness. Oh that this may not be as the morning cloud and as the early dew! By His grace I will persevere with more earnestness than ever, labouring to work out my own salvation in an entire and habitual dependance upon Him." "If you have truly learned to feel the insufficiency of your own powers," says the Dean of Carlisle, to whom he had poured forth his earnest desires after a more rapid growth in holiness, "you have made more progress than you think of; and if you can support that feeling and act upon it for any time together, your advance is very considerable." He judged himself indeed to be "in a more pleasing state." "I have been praying," he says, "earnestly to God for His Spirit through Christ to renew my corrupt nature and make me spiritually-minded; what folly is all else! Let me take courage, relying on the sure promises of God in Christ and the powerful operations of the Spirit of grace. Though I am weak He is strong. I must more cherish this heavenly inhabitant."

This tranquil state of feeling was henceforth fostered by a system of greater domestic intercourse with the friends whose principles he valued, and by mingling

consequently less frequently than of old in the turbulent currents of life. Some such alteration in his plan was rendered necessary by the loss of the opportunity of retirement which had been afforded him, since he ceased to own a house at Wimbledon, by the enlightened hospitality of his relative John Thornton. "Young men and old have different habits," said his kinsman when he offered him a room in his house and the command of his spacious garden, "and I shall leave you therefore to keep your own hours, and take care that you are not interrupted."

Of this offer he availed himself until the death of Mr. Thornton in 1790, and in the course of 1792 he agreed to share a house on Clapham Common with Mr. Henry Thornton, the youngest son of his deceased relative. "Henry Thornton," he says,[42] "has bought Lubbock's house at Battersea Rise, and I am to share it with him, and pay so much per annum towards expenses. Last night I went over the house and grounds with Grant and Henry Thornton. How thankful I should be, to whom it is the only question, which of many things all comfortable I shall choose!" Whilst his general influence was silently extending, there grew up around him here a chosen circle of peculiar friends. Amongst these must especially be noticed the Hon. E. J. Eliot, Mr. Grant, and Mr. Henry Thornton. Mr. Eliot,[43] his early friend and fellow-traveller, was now settled, for the sake of his society, in the immediate

[42] Diary, May 16.

[43] For an interesting tribute to Mr. Eliot's memory, see Reports of the Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor.

neighbourhood of Battersea Rise. . The loss of a wife to whom he was ardently attached, (the favourite sister of Mr. Pitt,) had given a tone of earnest piety to the whole character of Mr. Eliot, and taught him to co-operate in every useful scheme suggested by his friend; whilst at the same time there had been inflicted on his spirit a wound from which he never rallied. His death, in 1797, was attributed by those who knew his inmost feelings, to the lingering sorrow of a broken heart. Of Mr. Grant and Mr. Henry Thornton it is needless here to speak. "Few men," says the latter, referring to this period, "have been blest with worthier or better friends than have fallen to my lot. Mr. Wilberforce stands at the head of these, for he was the friend of my youth. I owed much to him in every sense soon after I came out in life: for his enlarged mind, his affectionate and condescending manners, and his very superior piety, were exactly calculated to supply what was wanting to my improvement and my establishment in a right course. It is chiefly through him that I have been introduced to a variety of other most valuable associates." "When I entered life, I saw a great deal of dishonourable conduct among people who made great profession of religion. In my father's house I met with persons of this sort. This so disgusted me that, had it not been for the admirable pattern of consistency and disinterestedness which I saw in Mr. Wilberforce, I should have been in danger of a sort of infidelity." [44]

[44] Private and conversational memoranda of Mr. Henry Thornton.

Such was at this time his position; high in public estimation, and rich in private friends; engaged in the conduct of a most important cause; with his mind now disciplined by culture, and enriched by study; whilst the unseen life of his spirit, escaping from its early struggles, was strengthening into tranquil vigour, as religion took a firmer hold upon his character, and leavened more thoroughly the whole man. By this early self-discipline he had purchased the calm and peaceful obedience of the remainder of his course. He was now about to be tried in his political life with far more searching difficulties than any which he had yet encountered. Like that holy man of old to whom a severe observer has beautifully compared him, he was prepared by humility and self-denial for the arduous trials of a public life; and like him he supported them with uncorrupted faith. "From a careful scrutiny," says Mr. Matthias,[45] "into the public and private life of Mr. Wilberforce, I am inclined to think that his enemies would be forced into an acknowledgment that they can find no occasion against this man, except they find it against him concerning the law of his God."

[45] Pursuits of Literature.

APPENDIX.

APPENDIX.

Memoranda dictated by Mr. Wilberforce.

More private.

It would indicate a strange insensibility to the ways of a gracious Providence, if I were to suffer the circumstance of my having Dr. Milner for my fellow-traveller to pass without observation. Wishing for an intelligent and agreeable companion, I requested my friend, Dr. Burgh of York, to accompany me, a man of whom it is difficult for me to speak with moderation, full as my memory must ever be of marks of a kindness that could scarcely be exceeded, and of a disposition always to forget himself, and to be ready to conform to his friend's wishes. A fund of knowledge of various kinds, great cheerfulness of temper, and liveliness of fancy, rendered him a delightful companion. But he had qualities also of a higher order—an entire conviction of the truth of revelation; a considerable acquaintance with ecclesiastical history; just principles of religion; and as affectionate a heart as ever warmed a human bosom; with a continual promptitude to engage in every office of benevolence: but the habit of associating with

companions, and living for the most part in society which, whatever might be the opinion assented to by the understanding, exhibited no traces of spirituality in its ordinary conversation, had induced a habit of abstaining from all religious topics in his common intercourse, and even an appearance of levity which would have prevented his being known, except by those who were extremely intimate with him, or rather by those who being themselves also religious were likely to draw forth his secret thoughts and feelings, to have any more reflection than that average measure for which we are to give people credit, whose only visible attention to religion consists in their going to church on a Sunday. A gracious Providence prepared him, I doubt not, by a long illness for that change which he was to experience much sooner than could have been anticipated from the uncommon strength of his constitution, and the temperance of his habits; but had he been my fellow-traveller I should never have benefited by him in the most important of all concerns; indeed I am persuaded that we neither of us should ever have touched on the subject of religion except in the most superficial and cursory way.

To my surprise Dr. Burgh declined accepting my proposal, and I next invited Dr. Milner to accompany me, chiefly prompted by his acknowledged talents and acquirements, and by my experience of his cheerfulness, good nature, and powers of social entertainment. It was the more important to me to secure such a fellow-traveller, because we were to have a tête-à-tête in my carriage; the ladies of my party travelling with their maids in a coach. It is somewhat curious that, as I learned accidentally long afterwards, my grandfather had declared that in after-life I should go abroad with Isaac Milner as my tutor. I am bound to confess that I was not influenced to select Dr. Milner by any idea of his having religion more at heart than the bulk of our Cambridge society; and in fact, though his religious opinions were the same as his brother's, yet they were then far from having that influence over his heart and manners which they subsequently possessed; though it is due to him to declare that his conduct was always what is called correct and free from every taint of

vice, and he had a warmth of benevolence which rendered him always ready to every good work. I must go further; had I known at first what his opinions were, it would have decided me against making him the offer: so true is it that a gracious hand leads us in ways that we know not, and blesses us not only without, but even against, our own plans and inclinations.

The recollections which I had of what I had heard and seen when I lived under my uncle's roof, had left in my mind a prejudice against their kind of religion as enthusiastic and carrying matters to excess; and it was with no small surprise I found on conversing with my friend on the subject of religion, that his principles and views were the same with those of the clergymen who were called Methodistical: this led to renewed discussions, and Milner (never backward in avowing his opinions, or entering into religious conversation) justified his principles by referring to the word of God. This led to our reading the Scriptures together, and by degrees I imbibed his sentiments; though I must confess with shame, that they long remained merely as opinions assented to by my understanding, but not influencing my heart. At length, however, I began to be impressed with a sense of the weighty truths, which were more or less the continual subjects of our conversation. I began to think what folly it was, nay, what madness, to continue month after month, nay, day after day, in a state in which a sudden call out of the world, which I was conscious might happen at any moment, would consign me to never-ending misery, while at the very same time I was firmly convinced from assenting to the great truths taught us in the New Testament, that the offers of the gospel were universal and free, in short that happiness, eternal happiness, was at my option.

As soon as I reflected seriously upon these subjects, the deep guilt and black ingratitude of my past life forced itself upon me in the strongest colours. I condemned myself for having wasted my precious time, and opportunities, and talents; and for several months I continued to feel the deepest convictions of my own sinfulness, rendered only the more intense by the unspeakable mercies of our God and Saviour declared to us in the offers and promises of the gospel. These however

by degrees produced in me something of a settled peace of conscience. I devoted myself for whatever might be the term of my future life, to the service of my God and Saviour, and, with many infirmities and deficiencies, through His help I continue until this day.

Conscious of my having sadly wasted my time and neglected my opportunities of improvement, I began to consider how I might best redeem whatever of life might remain to me. Parliamentary business both of a public and private nature (for wherever any landed, commercial, or manufacturing interest was in question, the county of York was interested) found me full employment for my time during the sitting of the House. I therefore considered how to employ my recess to the most advantage. Accordingly so soon as parliament was prorogued, I commonly settled myself, except for occasional residences at Buxton or Bath when my health required it, in the house of some intimate friend, chiefly at Mr. Gisborne's and Mr. Babington's, who kindly also received my mother and sister, where I was allowed the entire command of my own time, and was very little incommoded by country hospitalities. I breakfasted in my own room, dined with the family, and resumed my studies in the evening, joining the family party when I took my little supper half an hour or an hour before bed-time.

This may be a proper time for mentioning the uncommon kindness and liberality which I experienced from my constituents. In former times the county members displayed their equipages annually at the races, and constituted a part of the grand jury at the summer assizes; the latter indeed I should have been glad to attend but for the unseemly festivities which commonly take place at that period; I was not however wanted; the number of gentlemen of large fortune in the county was far more than sufficient to constitute a most respectable grand jury both at the spring and summer assizes. I could not consistently with my principles frequent the theatre and ball room, and I knew that I should give offence by staying away were I actually at York; but no discontent was ever expressed at my not presenting myself to the county on these occasions. My friends appeared tacitly to admit my claim to the com-

mand of my own time during the recess, satisfied with my attending to their and the public interest during the session of parliament. In fact no man I believe was ever more punctual in his attendance on the House of Commons than myself. I was always in my place on the first day of the session, and I do not remember having been ever absent on the last, excepting once when I was drawn into the country a day or two before the prorogation by the illness of some of my family; occasionally also I was present at the county meetings, and when there I always took an active part in their proceedings.

That gracious Providence which all my life long has directed my course with mercy and goodness, and which in so many instances known only to myself has called forth my wonder and gratitude, was signally manifested in the first formation of my parliamentary connexion with the county of York, and in its unintermitted and long continuance. Had the change in my religious principles taken place a year sooner, humanly speaking I never could have become member for Yorkshire. The means I took, and the exertions I made, in pursuing that object, were such as I could not have used after my religious change; I should not have thought it right to carve for myself so freely, if I may use the phrase, (to shape my course for myself so confidently,) nor should I have adopted the methods by which I ingratiated myself in the good-will of some of my chief supporters; neither after my having adopted the principles I now hold, could I have conformed to the practices by which alone any man would be elected for any of the places in which I had any natural influence or connexion. . . . .

My having been member for Hull gave me the opportunity of making myself known as a public man; it led to my formation of political connexions, and to my cultivation of the art of public speaking—all of which were among the means that prepared the way for my representing the county.

All circumstances considered . . my mercantile origin, my want of connexion or acquaintance with any of the nobility or gentry of Yorkshire . . my being elected for that great county appears to me upon the retrospect to have been so utterly im-

probable that I cannot but wonder—and in truth I ascribe it to a providential intimation—that the idea of my obtaining that high honour suggested itself to my imagination and in fact fixed itself within my mind. I mentioned it as a possible event to one or two private friends, but not to Mr. Pitt or any of my political connexions; yet entertaining this idea I carefully prepared myself for the public debate that was soon to follow in the face of the whole county, and both at the public meeting and in the subsequent discussions which took place in the miscellaneous body of Mr. Pitt's supporters, it was this idea which regulated the line as well as animated the spirit of my exertions.

King's illness, 1788.

SELDOM has there been more political intrigue, even in the court of a pure monarchy, than prevailed in the ministerial circle in this country during the King's illness: and it is due to truth, and to the cause of political and moral integrity, to declare that one man, who by his strong public declarations, enforced by a manner of peculiar gravity and weight, obtained for himself the highest credit even from well-informed men throughout the country, was in fact utterly unworthy of the credit he acquired. This was Lord Thurlow. He was then Lord Chancellor, and consequently at such a season was to be regarded as the head of the government. It is well known that the Prince of Wales, together with Mr. Fox and the opposition of the day in both Houses, opposed in the strongest manner the plan for conducting the King's government during the continuance of his Majesty's illness, which had been devised by the King's ministers, and finally approved of by both Houses of parliament. This therefore must be considered the plan of Lord Thurlow, at least as much as that of any other member of the administration. So many of the regulations being of a legal character, the Chancellor's opinion would of course be entitled to peculiar weight and deference. Yet it is certainly true, however difficult it might be to obtain credence from those whose estimate of Lord Thurlow was formed from his own lofty pretensions and swaggering language, that on the very day on which the Regency Bill was to be contested in the House of Lords, Mr. Pitt, his colleague, knew not with certainty whether Lord Thurlow would support or oppose him.

So soon as the King's illness had assumed so decided a character as to render it indispensable for the administration

to consider of the measures which might be required in so novel and embarrassing a conjuncture, all the ministers were summoned to Windsor where his Majesty then resided, and the Cabinet Council was assembled in full force: the physicians were examined; and, the requisite consultation being concluded, Lord Thurlow was asked by the late Lord Camden if he would accompany him back to town. Lord Thurlow declined the proposal, alleging that he had a friend at Windsor, to whom he wished to pay a visit. Some circumstance leading Lord Camden to conceive a jealousy of Lord Thurlow's proceedings, he was led to inquire who the friend was whom the Chancellor was to visit, and he afterwards ascertained that it was no other than the Prince of Wales, to whom it can scarcely be doubted, since he could then see him for no other purpose, that he communicated the system which government was about to adopt; thereby giving the opposition, with which the Prince was then openly and avowedly connected, the advantage of knowing government's plan, and meeting it with the most effectual hostility.

During the progress of the sharp political contest which followed, (in the interval which elapsed previously to the passing of the Regency Bill,) Lord Thurlow was discovered to have been several times closetted with Mr. Sheridan, one of the Prince's chief advisers, once at least in the house of Mrs. Fitzherbert; yet this was the man who affected publicly to consider the granting to the Prince those unlimited powers which were contended for by the opposition as almost treason against the royal authority, and who exclaimed in the memorable phrase that was afterwards engraven to his honour on rings and snuff-boxes, "When I forsake my King, may my God forsake me."

There can scarcely be a doubt, that Lord Thurlow's sudden fit of loyalty resulted from the unexpected improvement in the King's health. In the instance of the King's illness, party spirit exhibited itself in its utmost force. It was notorious that if the executive power of the State should be lodged with the Prince of Wales, the Whigs, or rather those who claimed for themselves that distinction, would immediately come into office. Consequently, as men are naturally led to take the

direction of their wishes, the physicians who were friendly to the opposition confidently predicted that there was no hope of the King's recovery. Dr. Warren especially was the chief authority on this side, and he and the Prince's adherents set themselves in direct opposition to the Willis's, who with equal confidence predicted the King's recovery. The language on the one side was, that if a regency should once be established the King would never be suffered again to resume his authority; that of the other, that ministers were resolved at all hazards to restore him to his power, and the Willis's were said to be the supporters of the plot. Persuaded that his Majesty's restoration was hopeless, opposition did not press forward the parliamentary proceedings, as otherwise they would have done, and they gave into Mr. Loveden's motion for a fresh examination by a second committee. During these dilatory proceedings, the King became well enough to resume his authority. This same persuasion led to many unprincipled and even shameless desertions of the party with which they had formerly acted, by political speculators chiefly in the Upper House, who thought they could not be too early in worshipping the rising sun, and who were grievously disappointed when the King recovered. During several successive years Lord Thurlow continued to form a part of Mr. Pitt's government; but, as was remarked of him, he opposed every thing and proposed nothing. At length, when Mr. Pitt's Sinking Fund Bill was on its way through the House of Lords, he not only opposed it, but condemned it in such contemptuous language, that Mr. Pitt felt their union could continue no longer, either with advantage to the country, or credit to himself. He therefore wrote to the King stating this persuasion, and requesting his Majesty to decide whether he would part with his Lord Chancellor, or his First Lord of the Treasury. The King without difficulty determined the point in Mr. Pitt's favour, who in consequence brought Mr. William Grenville into the House of Lords, to make a stand against Lord Thurlow. Mr. Grenville had been made Foreign Secretary of State in 1789, being then Speaker of the House of Commons, in which office he was succeeded by Mr. Addington.

Vid. page 56.

Yorkshire Address, in 1784.

To the King's most Excellent Majesty.

"May it please your Majesty,

We, your Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects the freeholders of the county of York, alarmed at the present distracted state of public affairs, beg leave to approach your throne with assurances of an unfeigned and zealous attachment to your Majesty's person and government.

"Convinced that the very existence of our excellent constitution depends on the preservation of the due balance of power wisely placed in the different branches of the legislature, we declare ourselves equally solicitous to maintain the due prerogative of the Crown, and the just privileges of the two Houses of parliament.

"We cannot too strongly reprobate the late attempt to seize the property, and violate all the chartered rights, of the East India Company; the enormous patronage of which would have produced an influence equally destructive of the prerogative of the Crown and the liberties of the people.

"To remove ministers who made such an attempt we deem to be a just exertion of your Majesty's prerogative, and under

the peculiar circumstances of the case, we think your Majesty acted with equal justice by retaining your present ministers until an appeal to your people could be made. Imperfect as such an appeal to the constituent body must ever be under the present manifold defects of our national representation, we still conceive the calling of a new parliament to be the only true constitutional measure which your Majesty in your royal wisdom can adopt, to settle the present differences between the several branches of the legislature."

And after debate thereon, and the question put, whether the said Address should pass as the act of this meeting or not, upon the show of hands a considerable majority appeared to be in favour of the Address proposed:—But a division being demanded, the same immediately took place, and upon that division the Sheriff could not take upon himself to determine.

It was then alleged to be, and assumed as a necessary consequence of the Sheriff's determination in the mode above stated, that the said Address should be signed by him as the act of this meeting.

Resolved unanimously, that the thanks of the meeting be given to the High Sheriff for his impartial conduct in the business of the day.

Mr. Wilson then moved, and Major Pulleyne seconded, the motion that the Sheriff should be requested to present the said Address to his Majesty, which upon the question put, passed in the affirmative by a great majority.

WILLIAM DANBY, Sheriff.

March 25, 1784.

His own conduct. Without date or title.

I CANNOT deny that from associating with men of the world, and hearing their principles, and calculations, and prospects, the ideas of aggrandizement would sometimes present themselves to my mind, and court my adoption. Various gentlemen were raised to the Upper House, whom the partiality we feel where we ourselves are in question might excuse my considering as having no better pretensions than myself to such an elevation: and besides the solid advantages of a permanent seat in the legislature, the securing of which involved the possessor in no expense or trouble, the Upper House appeared from various considerations to afford a more favourable field for bringing forward religious and moral improvements, the neglect of which, I had almost said the entire forgetfulness of them, has long appeared to me to be the grand defect of all our modern statesmen (for the last century). How different in this respect are they, though blessed with the light of Christianity, from the great legislators of antiquity, in whom the conservation or improvement of the national morals was always the primary object of their care! My fortune too was greater than that of some of those who were raised to the peerage; and at that time I thought it far the most probable that I should never enter into married life. But a little reflection beat down at once all such worldly appetencies. Since there could be no possible plea of a public nature, my exaltation would appear, and truly appear, to arise solely from my own request, and therefore would not merely have exhibited the show, but the reality, of my carving for myself, (if I may so

express myself,) of my being the artificer of my own fortune; whereas the true Christian, deeming it to be his duty to pursue the course that will be most agreeable to the will of God, endeavours to discover the path of duty from the indications of the Divine will to be collected from the passing events and circumstances, considered in combination with his own qualifications and dispositions: his grand inquiry continuing always the same, how he may best promote the glory of God, and secure his own salvation and that of those whose interests are consigned by Providence to his care.

Independently however of all religious considerations, it appeared to me that no little injury had been done to the credit and character of the House of Commons by the numerous peerages that were granted to men who had no public claims to such a distinction, and whose circumstances clearly manifested that borough or parliamentary interest was the basis of their elevation: hence the inference formerly to be drawn from the support of Commoners of large landed property, that the ministers who enjoyed it enjoyed also the esteem and confidence of the public, was no longer to be drawn; nor were such men entitled to more credit for the independence and purity of their political support than the representatives of the most ordinary boroughs. Various were the instances of country gentlemen of family and fortune, who appeared for a time to be honouring government by their support, sometimes in opposition to their family habits or political connexions, when at length out came the Gazette, proclaiming the explanation of their conduct, or at least bringing it into doubt with those who were disposed to suspect the purity of politicians. An example therefore appeared to me to be required of a contrary kind, nor could it be exhibited more properly than in the instance of one who having been some time member for the greatest county in England, and being also the personal intimate of the Prime Minister, might be supposed likely to have been able, if he had made the endeavour, to succeed in obtaining the object of his wishes. Nor could the world, always sufficiently acute in discerning the faults and infirmities of those who profess to have more respect than ordinary for religion, have failed to notice the inconsistency of eagerness for worldly aggrandize-

ment in one, whose principles ought to have moderated his desire of earthly distinctions, and to have rendered him even jealous of an advancement which would be likely to augment his temptations, and thereby increase the danger of his making shipwreck of his faith.

If such were my conclusions in the circumstances in which I was then placed, how much have they been strengthened since I have been blessed with a family! No one who forms his opinions from the word of God can doubt, that in proportion to a man's rank and fortune the difficulty of his progress in the narrow road and his ultimate admission into heaven is augmented; and no Christian can possibly doubt its being a parent's first duty to promote his children's spiritual advancement and everlasting happiness; but were their comfort in this life only, the object in view, no one at my time of life who has contemplated life with an observant eye, and who has looked into the interior of family life, can entertain a doubt that the probability of passing through the world with comfort, and of forming such connexions as may be most likely to insure the enjoyment of domestic and social happiness, is far greater in the instance of persons of the rank of private gentlemen, than of that of noblemen who are naturally led to associate with people of their own rank—the sons being led to make fortune their primary object in the forming of matrimonial connexions that they may be able to maintain their stations in society. As for the daughters, private gentlemen of moderate fortunes, and clergymen, and even still more mercantile men, have few opportunities of cultivating an intimacy with them, and are afraid of venturing upon a connexion for life with partners whose opinions and habits have been formed on a scale disproportionate to the resources of people of moderate fortunes.

Vid. page 133.

Prospectus of the Society for Enforcing the King's Proclamation.

We, the undersigned, truly sensible of His Majesty's tender and watchful concern for the happiness of his people, manifested in his late royal Proclamation, and being convinced of the necessity, in the present juncture, of our attending to His Majesty's call on all his faithful subjects to check the rapid progress of impiety and licentiousness, to promote a spirit of decency and good order, and enforce a stricter execution of the laws against vice and immorality, do agree to form ourselves into a Society, for the purpose of carrying His Majesty's gracious recommendation into effect.

2. With this view we will be ourselves, and will countenance and encourage others in being, vigilant in the effectual prosecution and punishment of such criminal and disorderly practices as are within reach of the law.

3. We will endeavour to afford the Magistracy such assistance in the discharge of their duty as the nature of the case may require.

* Duke of Montagu, President.

Duke of Buccleugh
Marlborough
Northumberland
Grafton
Chandos
* Marquis of Buckingham
Lord Ailesbury
Hopetoun
Dartmouth
Guilford
North
Radnor
Effingham
Brudenell
Harcourt
* Muncaster

Archbishop of Canterbury
York
Bishop of Hereford
Chichester
St. Asaph
* Salisbury
Peterborough
Ely
Rochester
Chester
Oxford
Lincoln
Bangor
Lichfield
Gloucester
Norwich
Llandaff
St. David's
Bristol

* Sir Lloyd Kenyon
* William Dolben
Henry Hoghton
James Long
* Charles Middleton
* Mr. Mainwaring
* Brook Watson

* Mr. Morton Pitt
* Samuel Thornton
* Wilberforce
* Edwards Freeman
Richard Milnes
* Rev. Dr. Glasse

Note. The names to which asterisks are annexed are those of members of the Committee.

Vid. page 365.

Letter from Right Hon. William Pitt, to William Wilberforce Esq.

This letter is printed from a copy retained by Mr. Wilberforce, when he gave the original, as an autograph, to the Right Hon. John Wilson Croker. It was accompanied with the following statement, for which the writers are indebted to Mr. Croker.

" Happening to find this letter on looking for some pressing paper, I add to it the solemn assertion of a fact, which I perfectly recollect, viz. that the King, knowing Mr. Pitt's indifference to his pecuniary interests, at the same time that he wrote to Mr. Pitt the letter herein mentioned, wrote also to Mr. Dundas, (afterwards Lord Melville,) requesting him to use his influence with Mr. Pitt to induce him to accept this office.

W. Wilberforce."

Mr. Croker adds, " Mr. Wilberforce's recollection as to the King's writing to Mr. Dundas, to induce Mr. Pitt to accept the office, was quite correct; for Mr. Croker possesses also the original of that note, which is as follows:

THE KING TO MR. DUNDAS.

'Windsor, Aug. 6, 1772.
$\frac{m}{55}$ p. 7. a. m.

'The enclosed is my letter to Mr. Pitt, acquainting him with my having fixed on him for the office of Warden of the Cinque Ports. Mr. Dundas is to forward it to the west, and to accompany it with a few lines expressing that I will not admit of this favour being declined. I desire Lord Chatham may also write, and that Mr. Dundas will take the first opportunity of acquainting Lord Grenville with the step I have taken.*

G. R.

'Mr. Pinckney may have his audience on Wednesday.'

"This is I suppose the only instance extant in which the Sovereign thought it necessary to make interest with the private friends of a minister to induce him to accept a royal favour."

* A part of this letter is printed in Tomline's Life of Pitt.

END OF VOL. I.

JOHN CHILDS AND SON, BUNGAY.

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